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WAYNE ROONEY

and the £30million gamble to revive Man United...

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EDITOR
Gavin Hamilton
ART EDITOR
Gary Payne
PRODUCTION EDITOR
Peter Neish
PICTURE EDITOR
Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR
Jamie Rainbow
EDITORIAL SECRETARY
June Hiscock
PICTURES
Empics, Allsport, Reuters, PA Photos

Thanks this issue to
Mike Hughes, David Rallis

EDITORIAL
King's Reach Tower, Stamford Street,
London SE1 9LS
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7261 5737
Fax: +44 (0) 20 7261 7474
E-mail: world..soccer@ipcmedia.com

ADVERTISING
Greg Dunbar, Simon Gerard, Tory Hunt
ADVERTORIALS AND SPONSORSHIP
Dan Yeadon
PRODUCTION MANAGER Tom Jennings

MANAGING DIRECTOR
Paul Williams
PUBLISHING DIRECTOR Hamish Dawson
PUBLISHER Belinda Cooper

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+44 (0) 20 8519 3695 (fax)
Binders +44 (0) 20 8519 3969

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 7261 7715 or 7082
E-mail: Siriliya..Nawalkar@ipcmedia.com

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SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
Rockwood House,
9-17 Perrymount Road, Haywards Heath,
West Sussex RH16 3DH, England
Tel: +44 (0) 1444 475 675

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OCTOBER 2004

WORLD SOCCER comment

A TALE of two competitions, this month. One – the Olympic Games football tournament – which grows more insignificant with every edition. The other – the Champions League – which grows in popularity and importance every year.

It shouldn't really be that way. The Olympics, with its laudable values and global spotlight, should walk all over the Champions League, which represents so much that is bad about the modern game, with its deference to television money and corporate sponsors.

I've tried to like the Olympics, believe me. But it's hard to take seriously when few of the competing teams do so. That the Greeks, on such a high from their astonishing success at Euro 2004, should perform so badly on home soil, in front of such sparse crowds, tells its own story.

World Soccer is often accused of being Euro-centric. That charge will no doubt be levelled again for ignoring the importance of Argentina's victory in Athens. But from a neutral standpoint, the success of Iraq in reaching the semi-finals was a far more appealing story.

The significance of Argentina's victory may only be realised if and when they succeed at the 2006 World Cup. Yet Olympic successes have provided a number of false dawns over the years, not least in 1996, when great things were predicted for Nigeria after they became the first African side to win the Olympic title.

In contrast, the Champions League provides a much better gauge of the current state of the game, from the conflicts of interest thrown up by Chelsea's draw with CSKA Moscow to Brazil's seemingly endless ability to produce players who shine on the world stage.

Zinedine Zidane's recent retirement from the French national side (page 24) means the Champions League will continue to be blessed by his talents for some years to come, we hope. Yet his decision will also be taken by some as proof that the Champions League is now the true test of footballing superiority.

The reality is slightly more complicated. At club level, national lines are becoming increasingly blurred. Arsenal are now more French than English, Milan and Barcelona have large Brazilian contingents, while there are more English players in the starting line-up at Real Madrid than in many Premier League sides.

It makes the task of predicting a winner of this season's Champions League all the harder. But that's all part of the fun, isn't it?

Gavin Hamilton, Editor (gavin_hamilton@ipcmedia.com)

*** SAVE MONEY ON WORLD SOCCER SEE OUR SPECIAL SUBSCRIPTION OFFER ON PAGE 62

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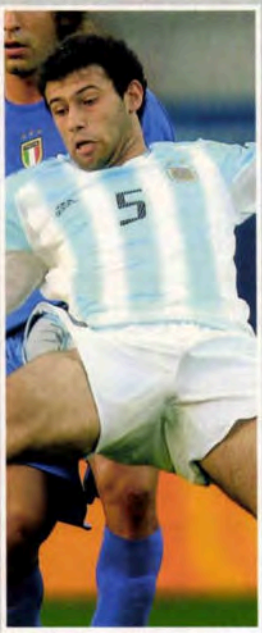

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WS WORLD SOCCER Transfers

Wayne's worth

Manchester United's £30million deal for Wayne Rooney is a gamble worth taking, says Gavin Hamilton

WAYNE ROONEY IS a reluctant superstar who has travelled an awful long way in the past 12 months. It is easy to forget that he is still only 18 years old.

On completing his £30million transfer from Everton to Manchester United – the most expensive deal of the summer – Rooney admitted: "Over the last year, I have matured a lot on and off the pitch. I have had to because a lot of people are trying to bring me down. There is going to be a lot more pressure on me now but I am big enough and strong enough to handle it."

Rooney made such a huge impact at Euro 2004 because few people in mainland Europe had actually seen him play. But it was precisely that lack of experience that motivated his move to Old Trafford, where he has signed a six-year contract worth more than £50,000 a week.

"The Euros were a fantastic experience for me. It made me realise I could play at the highest level," he said. "When you are sitting with England and all the players are talking about 'We've got such and such in the Champions League on Wednesday', I want to be playing in the biggest club tournament in the world."

Such words will do little to appease Everton fans, angry that Rooney has turned his back on his boyhood club. But it now appears likely that Everton were preparing to sell Rooney even before Euro 2004. After the forward's performance in England's 2-1 defeat by France in Lisbon, Everton chairman Bill Kenwright was quoted as saying: "[Manager] David Moyes and I agreed Wayne has to be a £50million player now."

Such a valuation was designed to attract the attentions of Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich. But when that tactic failed, Everton offered Rooney a new £50,000-a-week contract in a public show of their determination to keep the player.

If Alex Ferguson was interested in signing Rooney, it wasn't showing. Ferguson and Rooney's agent, Paul Stretford, met socially at a celebrity golf tournament in Portugal's Algarve on the eve of the Euro 2004 Final. They spent longer than was necessary lingering over the buffet in the clubhouse at the Vila Sol club, out of earshot of other golfers. Later that afternoon, Ferguson declined to answer questions about Rooney.

A few days later United chief executive David Gill confirmed that the asking price was too high. "We can't afford to spend £45million or £50million on one player," he said. "One reason why we run a successful operation is because we work within financial parameters."

United's summer transfer business had been conducted earlier than usual. Liam Miller had long been due to arrive on a free transfer from Celtic, having signed a pre-contract last year. Alan Smith signed from relegated Leeds in late May and was joined a fortnight later by Argentinian defender Gabriel Heinze. All the suggestions were that if Rooney was a target, United were prepared to wait until the mid-season transfer window to make their move.

Meanwhile, Rooney's strained relations with Everton were reaching breaking point. A lucrative interview deal with *The Sun* newspaper further angered opinion on Merseyside, where sales of the tabloid have never recovered from inaccurate reporting of the Hillsborough tragedy.

United's apparent lack of interest left Everton and Stretford's Proactive agency frustrated. It was left to Newcastle to – inadvertently or deliberately, depending on which conspiracy theory you believe – aid United in their quest for Rooney.

Newcastle's bid

With a week to go before the transfer market closed, Newcastle, with money burning a hole in their pocket from the surprise sale of Jonathan Woodgate to Real Madrid, tabled an official bid of £20m for Rooney. It was rejected out of hand by Everton, who were now confident that United, having now entered the fray by matching Newcastle's offer, would engage in a bidding war.

By now Rooney had formally requested a transfer from Everton. Newcastle returned with a £23.5m bid, which United trumped, leading to the negotiations that eventually confirmed Rooney as a Manchester United player.

By the time Rooney was paraded at Old Trafford, Newcastle had sacked their manager, Bobby Robson. That suggested that their bids for Rooney were probably a ruse to diffuse fans' anger over the sale of Woodgate.

A more controversial theory involves the son of Newcastle chairman Freddie Shepherd. Kenny Shepherd works for Stretford and Proactive, who stood to gain a huge pay day from a Rooney transfer to Old Trafford. Was Shepherd senior persuaded to bid for Rooney to spark Man Utd's interest in the deal? Nobody knows for certain, but we do know, thanks to Man Utd's new policy of transparency in their transfer dealings, that Stretford and Proactive will receive up to £1.5m for the sale of Rooney to Old Trafford.

"I'm very excited," Ferguson said. "I think we've got the best young player this country has seen in the past 30 years. He's not the finished article yet, but we've got experience of bringing young players to the club and bringing them on."

Must do better

Last season, the FA Cup Final victory over Millwall could not hide the disappointment over the failure to reach the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time since 1996 or the fact that in the Premier League, United have been eclipsed by the blistering football of Arsenal and the financial power of Chelsea.

The signing of Rooney lowers the average age of players signed by Ferguson in the past four seasons to 22. The United manager is clearly happier working with younger players; the most high-profile fallouts of recent years have been with older players (David Beckham, Juan Veron, Fabien Barthez).

As for Rooney, the move to Old Trafford makes sense, especially as he will be under the media microscope even more intensely than in the past year. Recent tabloid revelations about the teenager's private life have exposed the fickle nature of his fame, but at United he will find an ally in Ferguson, as along as he stays out of trouble.

"Wayne will get the same advice and protection as all our players," said Ferguson. "He will find security in the dressing-room with people like Keane, Scholes, Giggs and the Nevilles, who are all mature, stable professionals. Wayne will see what these players have grown into and it is not by accident."

Rooney is adamant that he can look after himself. "As a professional footballer, I know myself. No one has to tell me how to behave on or off the pitch," he said. "I don't think he [Ferguson] has to say anything to me."

After hearing Rooney say that, Ferguson whispered "well done". United's manager will be hoping he has cause to repeat those words in nine months' time.

'I'm very excited. I think we've got the best young player this country has seen in the past 30 years'

Alex Ferguson

Controversially, Stretford was paid by both United and Rooney for his role in the deal: £500,000, rising to £1m, as commission for negotiating the player's personal terms; and £500,000 from United as a finder fee for setting up the deal with Everton.

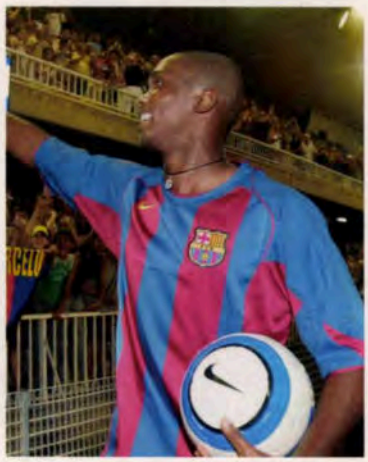
Whether or not such an arrangement contravenes FIFA regulations remains to be seen. Whatever, United got their man. And although the fee could eventually rise to £30m, Everton have only received £10m so far, with another £10m arriving next summer and the rest linked to bonus targets: £3m after Rooney has been at United for three years, £4m if Rooney wins the Premier League and Champions League with United; plus further payment linked to contract extensions and number of England caps won.

Seen in those terms, it is an excellent piece of business by United. First and foremost because of the impact that Rooney may have on the pitch.

SUMMER'S TOP 10 TRANSFERS

Wayne ROONEY	
Everton to Man United	£30m
Didier DROGBA	
Marseille to Chelsea	£26m

RICARDO CARVALHO (above)	
Porto to Chelsea	£22m
Walter SAMUEL	
Roma to Real Madrid	£18m



Samuel ETO'O (above)	
Mallorca to Barcelona	£17m
Djibril CISSE	
Auxerre to Liverpool	£15m
Jonathan WOODGATE	
Newcastle to Real Madrid	£14m
PAULO FERREIRA	
Porto to Chelsea	£14m
Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC	
Ajax to Juventus	£13.5m
Arjen ROBBEN	
PSV to Chelsea	£12m

Michael Owen is left out of Liverpool's Champions League qualifier in Austria

10/08/04

Australia and Tunisia draw 1-1 in their opening group match at the Athens Olympics

11/08/04

Greece pick up their only point of the Olympics in a 2-2 draw with South Korea

11/08/04

Mali draw 0-0 with Mexico on their way to topping their Olympic group

11/08/04

HEADLINERS

IRAQ'S OLYMPIC SIDE

Triumph in adversity in Athens

A YEAR AGO, Iraq's football federation had been disbanded, the team had no facilities and no cash and the country was suspended by the International Olympic Committee.

Twelve months on, Iraq's footballers produced one of the most intriguing sporting stories of the year by reaching the semi-finals of the Olympic Games football tournament.

The IOC reinstated Iraq only in February, giving them little time to prepare for an Olympic qualifying campaign. In April, German Bernd Stange resigned as national coach, claiming the authorities had advised him to leave Iraq for his own safety. His assistant, former international Adnan Hamd, took charge and oversaw an unlikely 3-1 victory over Saudi Arabia which clinched Iraq's place in Athens.

For a team whose players in the past had suffered from brutality and alleged torture at the hands of the late Uday Hussein, Saddam's eldest son, it was a remarkable achievement.

The Iraqis had posted a warning to their Olympic rivals by reaching the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup in July. But expectations were low when they arrived in Athens, the 48-strong delegation having been airlifted out of Iraq, and on to Jordan, by the Australian Air Force. Hamd said: "We may have a chance against Costa Rica and Morocco." But the chances of beating group favourites Portugal, Cristiano Ronaldo et al, were slim.

Yet Iraq stunned Portugal in their opening game, winning 4-2, and went on to beat Costa Rica next time out to clinch a quarter-final berth against Australia. A hard-fought win set up a semi-final meeting with Paraguay, and, incredibly, the Iraqis were in sight of a medal.

"In spite of the past situation and dire economic problems, they played without any fear," said Tiras Odisho Anwaya, head of the Iraq Olympic Committee, after the win over the Portuguese.

"Before, if you made a mistake or lost, you'd get punished. Now, our players can play the way they want. They can shoot and miss and not be afraid."

It was a theme that was quickly taken up by US president George Bush. "The image of the Iraqi soccer team playing in this Olympics, it's fantastic, isn't it?" Bush said. "It wouldn't have been free if the United States had not acted."

This prompted a storm from the Iraqis. "How will he meet his god having slaughtered so many men and women?" midfielder Ahmed Manajid told *Sports Illustrated*. "He has committed so many crimes."

The row overshadowed Iraq's achievement and undoubtedly affected the team, who lost their semi-final to Paraguay 3-1, then were beaten 1-0 by Italy in the bronze-medal play-off.

Hamd was philosophical, saying: "To be honest, even our happiness at winning is not real happiness because we are worried about the problems in Iraq, all the daily problems that our people face back home."

John Holmesdale

'Even our happiness at winning is not real happiness because we are worried about all the daily problems our people face back home' *Iraq coach Adnan Hamd*

Iraq players celebrate their surprise 4-2 win over Portugal in their opening Olympic game

12/08/04

Rapid Wien suffer a shock 2-0 defeat at home to Russian side Rubin Kazan in the second qualifying round of the UEFA Cup

12/08/04

Michael Owen, alongside Alfredo Di Stefano, is presented to the media as a Real Madrid player

14/08/04

CLAUDIO RANIERI

Back to winning ways with Valencia

HE MAY HAVE won nothing in four years at Chelsea, but Claudio Ranieri took just weeks to land a trophy on his return to Valencia. His new side, the UEFA Cup holders, beat European champions Porto 2-1 in Monaco to win the European Supercup.

Ironically for Ranieri, it was a return to the stadium where his Chelsea career had unravelled in the first leg of last season's Champions League semi-final. Chelsea had led 1-0 only for Ranieri's misguided substitutions to hand the initiative back to Monaco, who recovered to win 3-1.

'I have returned home; my heart has never left this club...I am grateful for the good squad Rafa has left me'

It gave owner Roman Abramovich, his yacht moored in the Monte Carlo harbour, the excuse he needed to sack Ranieri and replace him with Jose Mourinho.

Ranieri, now back at Valencia, where during a spell between 1997 and 1999 he laid the foundations for the subsequent success under Hector Cuper and Rafa Benitez, has stuck with the tried and tested.

He has brought in a clutch of Italians – Marco Di Vaio, Stefano Fiore and Bernardo Corradi – but the hard-working core of the side that won last season's Spanish League title remains.

"I have returned home; my heart has never left this club," said Ranieri. "I shared their sadness in the Champions League and their happiness in the UEFA Cup. I am grateful for the good squad that Rafa has left me, many of whom I know from my previous time here. I promise to work my hardest to keep the team at the top."

In Monaco, headers by David Albelda and striker Di Vaio ensured that victory over Porto was never in doubt. A stunning late goal from new signing Ricardo Quaresma gave Porto some hope, but the absence of last season's key player, Deco, now at Barcelona, was telling.

"It is a great consolation for losing the Spanish Super Cup [to Zaragoza] and my boys did a good job," added Ranieri.

"They must take the credit for working so hard and winning the UEFA Cup last season to get here; I've just added a little bit. I have received a great team. Rafael Benitez worked very hard for Valencia and I want to continue in this way.

"I like men who get up quickly after they've fallen."

Ranieri was talking about his players, but he could easily have been talking about himself.

Gavin Hamilton

On a night of international friendlies, Berti Vogts' Scotland are humiliated by Hungary, coached by Lothar Matthaus, in a 3-0 defeat at Hampden Park

18/08/04

Holland, in their first game under Marco Van Basten, draw 2-2 with Sweden in Stockholm in a rematch of the Euro 2004 quarter-final. Van Basten gives debuts to a number of young players

18/08/04

WS WORLD SOCCER Brian Glanville

...on his doubts over Owen's move to Madrid...the continuing Thompson and Palios bad joke...Newcastle's poor treatment of Robson... Wright-Phillips: better late than never for England

MICHAEL OWEN made a refreshingly and reassuringly bright start for Real Madrid when he came off the bench in Mallorca to set up an easy winning goal for Ronaldo. But why was he on the bench at all?

Admittedly, he was philosophical about it all when he arrived in Madrid – to no great Beckhamesque fanfare of trumpets – saying modestly that he expected merely to be a squad player.

Owen? A squad player? The very prospect of it horrified me. Beyond doubt he has been one of the three outstanding English players of the past 15 years, Gazza and Wayne Rooney the others.

I've admired Owen ever since I had the good fortune to see him make his Liverpool debut, as a substitute, one evening at Selhurst Park. Needless to say, he scored.

Quite why he was so keen to join Real Madrid and leave the club he'd been with since boyhood perplexes me. He lived in splendour on his rolling acres, he earned a fortune from endorsements as well as his salary at Anfield.

I'm quite sure Owen is a better, more effective player than Raul, whom he replaced against Mallorca and who had such a wretched Euro 2004, but he has still gambled by leaving Anfield.

And what have Liverpool looked like without him? New manager Rafael Benitez has talked a very good game since taking over, and has even won the trust of key midfielder Steven Gerrard. This is somewhat surprising when you recall that in Portugal Gerrard was complaining about the fact that Benitez, allowed access to England's headquarters by the over-permissive Sven Goran Eriksson, had thrown him into confusion.

'I'm quite sure Owen is a better, more effective player than fellow Real Madrid forward Raul, but he has still gambled by leaving Anfield'

Yet under Benitez, who seems determined to change the club into a sort of Atletico Anfield as one Spanish player succeeds another, Liverpool have made a wretched start. They were humiliated at Anfield by obscure and humble Grazer AK in the Champions League, although they reached the group stage, while Bolton also beat them in the League.

The truth is that there is no substitute for Owen, certainly not the hugely expensive Djibril Cisse, who has been finding it hard to dovetail with Milan Baros.

Yes, I know there was just one year left on Owen's Liverpool contract, but I still think they should have moved heaven and earth to keep him.

WOULD you believe it? Well, yes, since it concerns the Football Association, perhaps you would. The limp and ineffectual chairman Geoff Thompson is being removed only to emerge as a candidate to become UEFA president! Seemingly it isn't just a bad joke, though if Thompson does get the job the joke will be on Europe.

Moreover, it has been reported that Mark Palios, the blessedly departed FA chief executive, is to be paid compensation. What? Palios? The man who ludicrously and profligately more than doubled Sven Goran Eriksson's already excessive salary right after he had been talking to Chelsea again and before we knew what he and England would do in Portugal.

On top of that, Palios, through his publicity chief, Colin Gibson, tried to persuade the *News of the World* to keep Eriksson in the forefront on the Soho Square follies, and keep his own name out of it.

Compensated? He should be execrated.

POOR Bobby Robson. The writing was well and truly on the Gallowgate wall when at the start of this season he was told that his contract with Newcastle wouldn't be renewed when it ended.

Iraq beat Australia in controversial circumstances in the quarter-finals of the Olympic Games soccer tournament
21/08/04

England defender Jonathan Woodgate is unveiled as Real Madrid's latest signing
21/08/04

Notes & quotes

"I've never played against a stronger side. They can definitely win the 2006 World Cup."
Italy's Giuseppe Sculli after gold medallists-to-be Argentina had beaten his side 3-0 in the semi-finals of the Olympic tournament.

"At the moment, we're the favourites. The others haven't qualified yet."
New Germany skipper Michael Ballack clutches at straws as he looks ahead to the next World Cup.

In the mood...Iraqi fans against Portugal

"Iraqis love football. We just hope we've given them a little pleasure at home."
Iraqi striker Mohammed Emad after his side sensationally beat Portugal 4-2 at the Olympics.

"You have to match their power in the air and play as fluidly as possible, moving the ball around very quickly."
Albania boss Hans-Peter Briegel explains how his team beat European champions Greece in a World Cup qualifier in Tirana.

Quite apart from the disrespect and lack of common humanity involved, what sort of way was this to run a railroad? Robson was a lame-duck manager, doomed before a ball was kicked. So he goes, and Freddy Shepherd remains, the chairman and controlling shareholder. This is the man who some years back was stitched up in a European hostelry together with another director by a crafty journalist. If I remember right, the two called Newcastle women "dogs", called Alan Shearer "Mary Poppins" and sneered at the mug punters who bought Newcastle United shirts at vastly over the odds.

Grovelling leaflets were issued to Newcastle fans, and Mr Shepherd is still there, firmly in charge.

Under his aegis, the Magpies have their own original way of doing things. Such as offering some £23million for Wayne Rooney, hard on the heels of losing at home to modest Spurs and away to Aston Villa. What would possess Rooney, who plainly had his eyes fixed on greater glories than he could achieve with Everton, to join a club whose last halcyon days were as FA Cup winners in the 1950s. (Yes, I do know about that Fairs Cup victory.)

Meanwhile, the Magpies sold gifted young centre-back Jonathan Woodgate to Real Madrid for £13m. Good business? Well, yes, I suppose, if you reckon that Woodgate seems to spend more time on the treatment table than on the pitch, but less so when you consider that Newcastle's defence is a kind of colander.

'What sort of way was this to run a railroad? Robson was a lame-duck manager, doomed before a ball was kicked this season'

Real are gambling first on the hope that Woodgate, crippled when he joined them, will get fit and stay fit; secondly, that in Madrid he will stay out of the kind of trouble that has dogged him in England.

Still, at least Woodgate will have the companionship of Michael Owen and David Beckham, both of them serene men. Good luck to them all.

GIVE Sven Goran Eriksson his due. At least he had the courage and initiative to give Wayne Rooney that early chance against Turkey at Sunderland in April 2003, which he seized so gloriously, galvanising an England team who had started so shakily.

But Eriksson was very wrong not to have a good look at Shaun Wright-Phillips before Euro 2004. He could have done England so much good in Portugal, just as he did at Newcastle against Ukraine in the recent friendly, when he came on at half-time to score that spectacular goal.

Wright-Phillips then splendidly set up a goal for Nicolas Anelka for Manchester City against Charlton before scoring a spectacular goal himself.

The sensible path for England must surely be to play Wright-Phillips, with his speed, control and thrust, on the wing, and David Beckham, never a true right winger, further infield, as he prefers.

Read Brian Glanville's weekly column at www.worldsoccer.com

Favourites Argentina beat Italy 3-0 in the Olympic Games semi-finals

24/08/04

Shakhtar Donetsk beat Club Brugge to qualify for the Champions League

25/08/04

United States beat Brazil 2-1 in extra-time to win the Olympic women's Final

26/08/04

Valencia celebrate beating Porto in the European Supercup

27/08/04

WS WORLD SOCCER **Paul Gardner**

The trouble with coaches...

Don't encourage them: they already think they're far more important than they actually are

OF COURSE, I WISH Marco Van Basten and Jurgen Klinsmann well in their new coaching roles. A couple of goalscoring forwards – that's a refreshing change on the bench, so much more encouraging than all those coaches who used to be dour defenders and anonymous midfielders.

So we can expect goalscoring outbursts from Germany and Holland. Just joking, you understand. Because there is something that I do find amusing about these appointments.

Simply this: coaches are now supposed to be the next big thing. Jose Mourinho himself has told us this. And I have come across more evidence – like the headline in the English press that, after a 1-0 Bolton win over Liverpool, proclaimed that Allardyce had beaten Benitez.

Now, if coaches and coaching are so all-important, how come two top jobs are given to guys who have no top-level coaching experience at all?

I guess there could be three answers to that. Firstly, that both Klinsmann and Van Basten have coaching licences, so they must already know all the highly complicated technical and scientific stuff that the coaching schools dish out – an answer which makes it clear that theory now ranks above practice in the coaching profession.

Secondly, could it possibly be that the scientific stuff doesn't matter, and it's the *playing* experience of Klinsmann and Van Basten that is suddenly the key to success?

Thirdly, and this is my preferred explanation, that coaching doesn't matter that much anyway. By coaching, I mean capital C coaching – the sort of stuff that coaches go on and on about in pre- and post-game interviews (and, in case you haven't yet had the pleasure, in the broadcasts of MLS games, which also feature interviews with the coaches while the game is in progress).

What that third explanation says is that the man is more important than the qualifications. As I said – amusing, because we are faced with a situation where the training and education of coaches gets, almost daily, more and more complicated and abstruse.

Yet when two of Europe's strongest soccer powers go looking for a national coach, they are obviously not interested in knowing whether the candidates are capable of using all that mystical knowledge – in other words whether they can actually *coach* or not.

'If coaches and coaching are so all-important, how come two top jobs are given to guys – Marco Van Basten and Jurgen Klinsmann – who have no top-level coaching experience at all?'

Amusing, yes, but also extraordinary. It has always been the case that – sweeping aside all the hogwash – there is only one realistic criterion for deciding whether a coach is any good or not: his record. Do his teams win more than they lose? Do they win championships, which you can refine a little: do they win the big games?

Yet even those statistics are unreliable. Sven Goran Eriksson, he of the £4million price tag, has won quite a lot of titles in his career. But his record so far with England is, what shall we say, unconvincing. Mourinho has arrived with two – recent – European triumphs to his credit, but are they any guarantee of success at Chelsea?

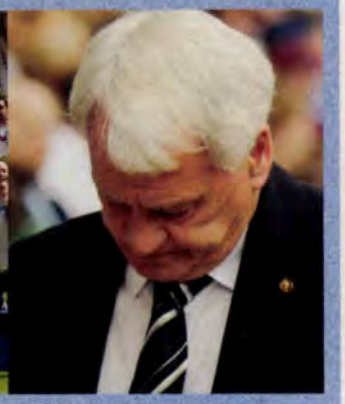
Another yardstick that frequently gets mentioned when measuring a coach's effectiveness is this: the players like him. This one is pretty obviously silly (I mean, the players may like Laurel and Hardy – but could they coach, do you think?).

Coaches themselves are obviously well aware that results are the only hard evidence they have to prove their worth. But acquiring a string of wins takes time – in the meantime, a message of efficiency must be conveyed.

And it usually comes in the form of stern words and warnings to the new coach's team. The 'I'm in charge now', the hard, no-nonsense

Argentina beat Paraguay to win their first Olympic gold medal

28/08/04



Bobby Robson is sacked as manager of Newcastle United

29/08/04

approach that we've seen recently from Mourinho, as well as Jose Camacho at Real Madrid and Felix Magath at Bayern Munich.

Sadly, what invariably happens with this approach is that the Beautiful Game takes a beating. Magath's methods produced an interesting response from Roque Santa Cruz: "I'm not going to start kicking opponents or throwing myself to the ground just to please this person."

But we've heard none of this macho stuff so far from Klinsmann and Van Basten. I suppose that could be down to their naivety in the world of coaching, but it would be nice to imagine that they're concentrating on other things – like producing teams that play skilful, attacking football.

It seems to me that Van Basten has the better chance of succeeding, because the Dutch have plenty of attacking talent. Then there's this: a couple of years ago Van Basten came out of a self-enforced soccer retirement when he published an article entitled "Football Must Become Fairer, Cleaner and More Spectacular!"

The article contained a number of suggestions on how to achieve those aims – and, honestly, I can't say I found any of them that impressive. They included abolishing offside and giving coaches a one-minute time-out in every game.

But if the ideas were somewhat shaky, the whole thrust of the article was not. It sharply identified the problems with the modern version of football – "There is something fundamentally wrong with our game," he said – and tried to find ways of countering them.

That was Van Basten when he was not involved in the sport. Now, as a coach, he has the opportunity to see if there's anything that *coaching* can do to produce the fairer, cleaner and more spectacular game that he so rightly wants to see.

I fear he will not find it easy. Coaches, for all their claims, are not innovators. They simply take what's there and try to exploit it. And what's there are rules and attitudes in dire need of change. In Van Basten's words: "Football has not moved with the times. Never before has the game suffered so much from its rules, several of which I think are deeply antiquated."

Until changes are made in those rules and attitudes, the odds are stacked against any coach who tries to be too adventurous.

Notes & quotes

"Every player has a duty to accept a national team invitation. Those who refuse should be fined."
Talkative Auxerre boss Guy Roux has an original take on Zinedine Zidane's international retirement.

"Not even Superman could take on as many jobs."
The former president of Belgian club St Trond, Leo Scheepers, comments on the workload of Marc Wilmots, who as well as being St Trond coach and general manager is an MP and a TV commentator.

"Voller is a good choice as Roma coach. He was a Roma player for five years and is probably more Roman than German."
Ex-Roma and Napoli boss Ottavio Bianchi on Rudi Voller's appointment as coach of the Serie A side.

Roma man...Rudi Voller

"When you don't have any money, you have to work harder."
Metz coach Jean Fernandez on his unsung team's fine start to the season, which included a 1-1 draw with Lyon and a 3-1 win at Marseille.

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Wayne Rooney is presented as Manchester United's new signing

01/09/04

Holland warm up for the World Cup qualifying campaign with a 3-0 win over Liechtenstein

03/09/04

Belgium are held to a 1-1 draw by Lithuania in a World Cup qualifier

04/09/04

Brazil stay top of the South American World Cup qualifying section after a 3-1 defeat of Bolivia in Sao Paulo

05/09/04

WS WORLD SOCCER Jim Holden

History favours Arsenal

Gunners have record books on their side in quest for first European Cup

WHAT should we call the extravagantly-talented Arsenal team who became the first in the history of global football to go through an entire 38-match League season unbeaten?

Some said they were The Invincibles. Others preferred The Immortals. Arsenal's own PR department settled on The Untouchables.

But there is one tag they cannot claim – European champions.

The club's inability to conquer the greatest stage of club football has long been a source of mystery. A team containing the panache of Thierry Henry and the power of Patrick Vieira are clearly good enough. The intelligence of Arsene Wenger's management is plain.

Yet for several seasons now Arsenal have failed to progress even beyond the quarter-final stage. They have remained, perplexingly, a club stuck in the foothills of Europe. It doesn't make sense. So I offer no overwhelmingly sensible and logical reason to support my belief that this year will be different, that this year the north London side will succeed in the Champions League. I merely point to the evidence of history.

The fact is that teams who perform the almost miraculous feat of going through a whole domestic season unbeaten then transfer that glow of invincibility into Europe.

When Milan played without defeat in the 34-game 1991-92 Serie A season they reached the next three Champions League Finals. When Ajax didn't lose in the 1994-95 Dutch season it coincided with two Champions League Finals. When Steaua Bucharest went three whole campaigns unbeaten in Romania in the late 1980s, they played in European Cup Finals at the start and finish of that period.

This is surely beyond mere coincidence. Instead, it illustrates that when a team develop the momentum Arsenal gained last season, the journey invariably takes them to the top of the mountain.

No team, anywhere, any place, has had a league season as spectacular. Arsenal's achievement, has, in my view, not been recognised and celebrated widely enough.

A few matches into the new Premiership season, Wenger's team overtook one of the great English League records, the 42-match unbeaten run of Brian Clough's Nottingham Forest in the late 1970s. The record books tell us that Forest's incredible feat coincided with the club winning two successive European Cups.

'Teams who perform the almost miraculous feat of going a whole domestic season unbeaten transfer that glow of invincibility into Europe'

The weight of history is firmly with Arsenal – and will more than balance out the weight of expectation that is the only credible explanation for failure to capture Europe's greatest club prize.

Invincibility is much more than happy statistics on a page. It is a blissful state of mind, it is Xanadu on a sports field.

Material factors help too. Arsenal were handed the kindest of draws in this season's group stage, set against PSV Eindhoven, Panathinaikos and Rosenborg. Group C, by contrast, contains Juventus, Ajax and Bayern Munich.

It was also a huge boost to the Gunners when captain Vieira resisted the tempting chance to play for Real Madrid. The French midfielder has been the heart of Wenger's side, and it was the ultimate tribute to the manager that his skipper chose Highbury over the Bernabeu.

Maybe he also made a calculated decision that Arsenal are now, finally, a better bet to win the Champions League than the *galacticos*.

The biggest danger may be the other English clubs in the competition, the risk of being lured into the kind of parochial dogfight in which Chelsea beat them in the quarter-finals last season.

Wenger considered Manchester United's acquisition of teenage sensation Wayne Rooney the most significant transfer of the summer. He has seen Jose Mourinho make an accomplished start at Chelsea.

There have been all-Spanish and all-Italian Champions League Finals. I believe an all-English showdown is a distinct possibility next May. And if Arsenal were to fulfil their elusive dream on a steamy night in Istanbul, what should we call them then?

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Poor relations

Only one signing by an Italian club featured in the top 10 of Europe's biggest summer transfers

PADDY AGNEW in Rome

THE FINAL WEEK of August traditionally sees attention focused on the transfer market. Yet, even if this year's dealings were marked by the usual, last minute, big-name signings (Zlatan Ibrahimovic and Fabio Cannavaro to Juventus, Fabrizio Miccoli to Fiorentina), consider another aspect of the market.

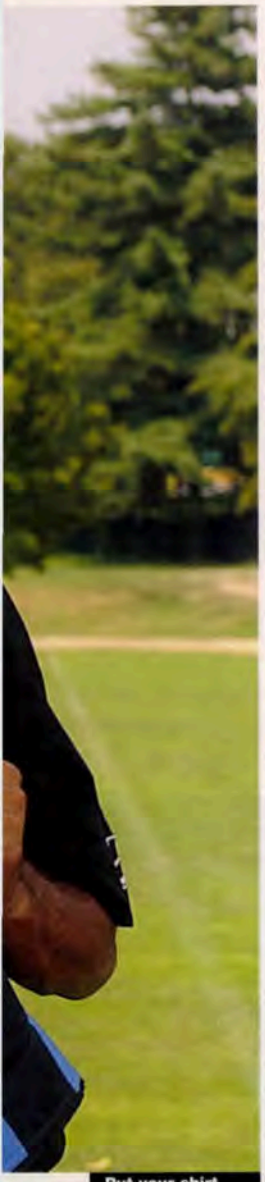
On the day that Manchester United signed the boy wonder of English football, Wayne Rooney, for £30 million, it became startlingly clear just how much financial clout the Premiership has gained and, by extension, just how much Serie A has lost in the past decade.

That the three biggest transfers of the summer and that six of the top 10 should have been pulled off by Premiership clubs is neither a surprise nor a novelty, merely the consolidation of an existing Foot-Biz trend. That Serie A should figure with only one transfer in the top 10 – Ibrahimovic's £13.5 move, from Ajax – is also no surprise. Those figures reflect the chill winds of economic austerity that have been blowing through Italy's badly mismanaged, misdirected national game.

Still, by the end of the transfer dealings the 'big three' – champions Milan, Juventus and Internazionale – all looked more the exception than the rule in that they seemed to have put together competitive squads.

The two Milan clubs had wound up most of their transfer activity long before the end-of-August deadline. Milan added Dutchman Jaap Stam (Lazio, £7.5m) and Argentinians Hernan Crespo (on loan from Chelsea) and Fabricio Coloccini (Villarreal, returning after loan) to an already strong squad.

Even if Inter did not land the last element in coach Roberto Mancini's ideal mosaic – Lazio's Brazilian Cesar – they had already



Put your shirt on us...Sinisa Mihajlovic and Ze Maria join the Inter set

done a lot of shopping for such as Argentinians Juan Veron (Chelsea, loan), Esteban Cambiasso (Real Madrid, free) and Nicolas Burdisso (Boca Juniors, £3.3m), as well as Dutchman Edgar Davids (free transfer), Brazilian Ze Maria (Perugia, £1.1m) and Serb Sinisa Mihajlovic (Lazio, free).

Juventus struck the unexpected last-minute deals when landing two significant players in Sweden striker Ibrahimovic and Italian captain and defender Cannavaro (from Inter, in a straight swap for Juve's Uruguayan keeper Fabian Carini). Even if Juventus keeper Gigi Buffon might have been stretching the imagination just a little when declaring that "now we're stronger than Real Madrid", the Fabio Capello-coached team look very serious contenders on both Champions League and Serie A fronts.

No club, however, was busier in the final hours of the transfer market than Lazio, whose new patron, Claudio Lolitto, astonishingly picked up nine players in nine hours – striker Tommaso Rocchi (Perugia, £1m), Antonio and Emanuele Filippini (Palermo), Argentinians Jose Talamonti (Rosario Central), Rojas Gonzales and Bryant Robert (both Gimnasia La Plata), Venezuelan Miguel Mea Vitali (Caracas), Italian Sebastiano Siviglia (Parma) and Croat Anthony Seric (Verona). Significantly, all these players, with the exception of Rocchi, were loan deals.

Into the breach...Rudi Voller

Cesare Prandelli, the Roma coach, resigned on the eve of the season's start in order to be with his wife, struggling with a life-threatening illness. Prandelli has been replaced by former Roma player and Germany's Euro 2004 coach, Rudi Voller, who has signed a one-year contract worth £1.4 million.

Reflecting on the possibility that he may be merely keeping the seat warm until such time as Prandelli is psychologically ready and willing to take over again at Roma, Voller probably spoke for many when saying: "If that is the case, I will be the first to embrace Prandelli and I'll head back to the peace and quiet of my boardroom job at Bayer Leverkusen."

Fiorentina's Miccoli coup

The last hurrah of the transfer market, however, went to promoted Fiorentina, who may have pulled off a minor coup in landing Miccoli from Juventus, paying £4.5m for half ownership. To some extent, Juve had to sell someone to help free cash for the Ibrahimovic deal. Miccoli himself summed up the situation candidly, saying: "Juventus had to sacrifice either me or [Alessandro] Del Piero. In the end, they sacrificed me…The Fiorentina offer came at the last moment and I said yes in less than 10 minutes."

Fiorentina may well be the stronger for the arrival of Miccoli but Juventus certainly did not look a weak side when easily dispatching Swedish champions Djurgardens 4-1 in the second leg of their Champions League qualifying tie. That result and Inter's 4-1 drubbing of Basle in their qualifier suggest the Italian season has got off to a reasonable start. In recent years, even such qualifying wins could not be taken for granted – remember Inter's elimination by Helsingborgs, not to mention Parma being knocked out by Rangers at this stage in recent years.

But if those Champions League wins sounded a positive note, the same could not be said of other Italian results at international level. New national team coach Marcello Lippi got his tenure off to an undistinguished start when beaten 2-0 by Iceland in Reykjavik. Given that the game was played in mid-August and that, either through injury or Olympic commitments, players such as Del Piero, Christian Vieri, Francesco Totti, Alberto Gilardino, Antonio Cassano, Cannavaro, Mauro Camoranesi and Andrea Pirlo were not available, the result has only a relative importance.

Only after the first few World Cup qualifiers can a serious assessment of Lippi's initial impact be made. The Serie A season has just started so Italy may well, as often in the past, be penalised in the early autumn by inferior fitness levels.

In a year marked by contrasting results at international level – with the Under-21 team winning the European Championship but the senior side flopping miserably at Euro 2004 – there were many who hoped that Italy's Olympic football team would set the new season off on the right note by winning in Athens. After all, the Olympic side was basically the Under-21 team with the addition of three overage players in Pirlo, Matteo Ferrari and Ivan Pelizzoli.

In the end, Italy had to settle for bronze when defeating plucky Iraq in a play-off after they themselves had been totally outclassed by eventual tournament winners Argentina in a 3-0 semi-final defeat. A bronze medal was no shameful thing but, yet again, Italian performances left something to be desired, at least from a tactical point of view.

Too often, striker Gilardino appeared to be ploughing a lonely furrow in which he was left to rely on support from midfield from such as Giuseppe Sculli, Daniele De Rossi, Angelo Palombo and Pirlo. The point was underlined by Argentina defender Giuseppe Ayala, who said: "Gilardino is a class player but perhaps he was left a bit too much on his own."

It might not have been lost on Ayala and others that the Under-21 coach Claudio Gentile, the 1982 World Cup winner, is also a graduate of the now-discredited Giovanni Trapattoni school of defensive thinking, having played under the ex-Italy, now Benfica coach at Juventus.

In defence of Gentile, Italy's preparations for the Olympic tournament were inevitably rushed and hardly compared to those of Argentina, who arrived in Athens with basically the same side that had gone so close to defeating Brazil in the Copa America Final in July. Nonetheless, even Italy's fortuitous quarter-final win over Mali made the point in a game where the African side were far more adventurous and creative.

'Lazio's new patron, Claudio Lolitto, astonishingly landed nine players in nine hours'

All washed up?

Raul's future with Spain and Real Madrid is suddenly a matter of intense debate

SID LOWE in Madrid

RAUL SI O SI, Raul yes or yes. That, said Spain's best-selling newspaper, sports daily *Marca,* was the "only conclusion" to be gleaned from the slapstick disaster of a Friday night in Valencia.

AS agreed. Madrid's other major sports paper emblazoned its front cover with "Raul always returns" in huge yellow letters, alongside a photo of the Madrid striker performing his familiar ring-kissing celebration. The Spain captain, they shouted, was the "only one you can rely on".

Which wasn't quite true, for *AS* and *Marca* had proven they too can always be relied upon. To call their response predictable would be like describing the Pope as having a passing interest in the *Bible*: a teensy bit of an understatement. The screaming pro-Raul headlines were inevitable. Indeed, the smart guesses made three days earlier had even foreseen their very wording.

"Mythological figures are not chosen by chance. If there's an earthquake, they save hundreds of lives. If an entire country points a suspicious finger, they do what they do best and silence the murmurs empathetically," wrote *AS*'s Madrid-supporting Tomas Roncero. "I am, of course, talking about Raul Gonzalez Blanco."

Of course. But what exactly had Raul done to earn such elaborate eulogies? He had scored for Spain. In a friendly. From the penalty spot. Against Scotland. Hardly the stuff of legend, but for the Madrid press, Raul himself and, it seemed, national coach Luis Aragones, it was enough to lay to bed Spain's burning debate – should Raul lose his place at Madrid and in the *seleccion*?

Raul's frighteningly impressive statistics – the Champions League's all-time top scorer, Spain's greatest marksman, three times a European Cup winner, all by the age of 26 – meant his achievements went unquestioned. He was afforded a benefit of the doubt rarely, if ever, conferred upon others. It helped, of course, that the dominant voices in the press came from the pro-Real Madrid camp and that Raul was a local boy.

Controversial signing...Woodgate

● Real Madrid's signing of Jonathan Woodgate has raised strong feelings in the capital. Juanma Trumuba of *AS* wrote: "There is stupor among *Madridistas*. No one can understand why the club spent [£14m] on a player who has virtually not played because of injury and who's been photographed more often with bobbies than with rival attackers. The Bernabeu loves the warrior spirit of the British, and this guy has smoke coming out his ears. But for the first time [club president Florentino] Perez has placed a risky bet."

Now, though, Spain and Madrid's previously untouchable captain found himself in the firing line for the first time. And while the Spanish love a good, and gratuitous, debate, the question marks had their foundation – even the stats had deserted him. Raul performed dismally at Euro 2004, hadn't scored in six internationals and had hit the net just three times (in 21 games) in the League in 2004.

Looking sluggish and unhappy, Raul's form has dipped horrendously and there are even grounds to question his long-term achievements, at least for the national team. He is yet to make an impact at a major finals, and of his record-breaking 38 goals for Spain, few came against the very best opposition. There were seven against San Marino but none against England, Brazil, Argentina, France, Holland or Portugal, and just one (a penalty) in three matches against Italy.

Who put the lights out?...Raul (centre) looks suitably bemused as Spain's friendly against Scotland in Valencia is halted

There are other problems, too. The awkward issue of Raul's position (he's not a No 9 and prefers to play just behind the striker but isn't really a creative playmaker) makes finding a role for the vision of Juan Carlos Valeron virtually impossible, an important factor in Spain's failure at Euro 2004.

Add to all that the explosion of Arsenal's Jose Antonio Reyes as a support striker and Michael Owen's arrival in Madrid and suddenly Raul was under threat. No fewer than 59 per cent of Canal Plus viewers said they preferred Owen to Raul, while another poll, in *AS*, showed 69 per cent thought he shouldn't be an undisputed choice for Spain.

Unconditional defenders

Yet Raul has his unconditional defenders – particularly among the press, who, not unjustly, insist that he brings an irreproachable attitude and leadership (even if leadership was sorely lacking in Portugal and during Madrid's collapse last season). Raul has pride, you can rely on him to sweat for the cause even if he's not playing well. What he might need, his defenders reluctantly conceded, is a rest, a change in fortunes. He needs to be helped back, not buried.

Raul's team-mates say he is underrated because he is not the most aesthetic player, and his managers have always backed him. Real Madrid's new coach, Jose Antonio Camacho, has already made it clear he doesn't see Owen replacing Raul.

Aragones, though, seemed to have other ideas, and when he announced that Raul would be on the bench for the Friday night friendly with Scotland the debate was cranked up another notch. Never mind that all the Madrid players, who had played on the Tuesday night, were left out. Raul would be on the bench!

One Valencian columnist tetchily, if gleefully, attacked the Spain captain's status by sniping: "Raul wasn't on the pitch, but the national anthem still played, the world kept turning and the game went on."

Only it didn't, not exactly. Instead, it turned into a disastrous, comically amateurish night for Spain, which started as it was to continue: with the temporary captaincy, awarded on the basis of most caps, embarrassingly taken off Ruben Baraja and given to keeper Iker Casillas at the last minute – on the say so of the stat-checking press gang. Only Raul would emerge a winner, and even his would prove a hollow victory.

In the howling wind and in front of a pathetic crowd of little more than 10,000 at the Ciutat de Valencia stadium, Spain were dreadful. Aggressive and quick, Scotland went ahead and would have had more but for Casillas. Then, at half-time, Aragones called on Raul and within10 minutes he latched on to a neat pass to pull back for Reyes, who was fouled. Raul took the penalty, scored, and his supporters went crazy. Never mind that Xabi Alonso was going to take the penalty until Aragones demanded he leave it to Raul.

Marca gave him "3/3, no more debates", while its match report read: "A great player can be judged by how much he's missed. Spain were shipwrecked without Raul. He brought them in from the dark."

In from the dark? Oops. Three minutes after his goal, the lights went out and the fun and games began. French referee Stephane Bre appeared and said he would wait 45 minutes for the floodlights to be fixed. Within 30 seconds, the Spanish federation's director of communications, who clearly hadn't communicated with Bre, appeared and explained that he would wait 30 minutes.

No one told the fans either way, but it hardly mattered as the lights were back on within five minutes. By then a monsoon had started and the players had sprinted off to be replaced by a Scot running to the centre circle to plant Spain and Scotland flags and a kilt-wearing nutter who dived through the mud to huge cheers.

As the pitch became waterlogged, the game was abandoned but the fans couldn't leave. They were stranded. The stadium was flooded; rain gushed in through the open sides, down the tunnel and towards the dressing-rooms, filling gangways with murky rivers.

Scots in kilts had the last laugh as trousers were rolled up to avoid a soaking, and one resourceful fan even grabbed a shopping trolley and a broom and tried to punt his way to safety. Those few players prepared to stop stood in flip-flops and brown seas to give interviews. "This can't happen," said Joaquin. "I hope whoever is in charge sorts this out, because it doesn't reflect well on Spain."

Raul, too, looked bitterly disappointed, which was hardly surprising: the postponement means that his goal doesn't count. But then try telling that to the press.

'Raul wasn't on the pitch but the world kept turning' *A Valencian writer snipes at the Madrid icon*

Peace makers

The national team's visit to Haiti was hailed as a success, despite opposition in Europe

BRIAN HOMEWOOD in Rio de Janeiro

WHILE KIERON DYER was whingeing about being played out of position at Newcastle and Svengate was engulfing the Football Association, Brazil were setting a somewhat better example.

The world champions took some of their biggest names, including the full three R complement of Ronaldinho, Ronaldo and Roberto Carlos, to Haiti to play a friendly aimed at promoting peace between the warring factions in the beleaguered Caribbean nation.

It turned out to be an afternoon that neither the Haitian public nor the players will ever forget. And in a sport where players and directors are renowned for their appalling behaviour, it was a welcome break from the routine.

Although only 15,000 people could squeeze into Port-au-Prince's rapidly refurbished national stadium – the improvements included a newly-laid synthetic pitch – to watch the game itself, several times that number lined the streets to catch a glimpse of the visiting players.

Strangely, the crowd control was considerably better than for an ordinary match at the Maracana.

To the delight of the locals, the Brazilian players stood on top of the United Nations tanks that took them from the airport and waved to the crowds as they passed by. Ronaldo said later that he wanted to make another visit, rating the experience as better than winning the World Cup. "It was a unique sensation and it had a great effect on me," he said. "I want to go back there and see the happiness of those people again. It was superior even to winning the World Cup. It will remain in the memories of all of us."

Not even Brazil's 6-0 win could dampen the enthusiasm of the public, whose own team had already been eliminated from the World Cup qualifiers by Jamaica. The crowd waved Brazilian flags and cheered the Brazilian goals, especially Ronaldinho's second when he waltzed through the middle of their defence.

The match was arranged on the initiative of the United Nations,

Tanks for the ride... Brazil's players received an armed escort from UN forces on arrival in Haiti

FIFA and the Brazilian government, whose troops now lead the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti. Possibly inspired by Pele's visit to Nigeria in 1967, when a two-day truce was called in the Biafra war so that both sides could see him play, Brazil president Luiz Inacio da Silva – popularly known as Lula – saw the chance for some soccer diplomacy.

The Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF), which usually charges a £600,000 appearance fee for away games, was happy to collaborate as president Ricardo Teixeira took the opportunity for some personal bridge-building.

Teixeira changes tack

Teixeira is eager to move closer to Lula's government after backing the wrong horse in the presidential elections two years ago. Then, Teixeira took the newly-crowned world champions to Fortaleza, political stronghold of Ciro Gomes, one of Lula's rivals, for the homecoming match against Paraguay and allowed the candidate to be photographed with the players before the game.

Not everyone entered into the spirit of the Haiti match, however. In a gesture typical of those who think that modern-day football revolves around Europe and the Champions League, Milan refused to release their three Brazilians, Kaka, Dida and World Cup captain Cafu. The club cited the new FIFA ruling that they only have to release players for friendlies in Europe. Bayern Munich then followed suit by withholding Lucio and Ze Roberto.

Like bickering schoolchildren, Milan and the CBF accused each other of behaving arrogantly. Teixeira said he had called Milan several times to try and solve the problem through dialogue but had got no reply. Milan said they had done exactly the same with the CBF. An indignant Teixeira took it out on the players, ruling that the five absentees would be left out of the squad for the World Cup qualifier against Bolivia. The words 'shooting', 'self' and 'foot' all sprang to mind.

At this point, Cafu, captain of the 2002 World Cup team, decided to speak out. "I virtually begged Milan to release me for the game but they wouldn't agree," he said. "This is the first time in my career I've been dropped by Brazil."

There were also plenty of people ready to point out Brazil has its own Haiti back home. Dozens of people die every week in the shanty-towns of Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo, victims of drug wars and revenge killings which have gone on just as long as the Haiti conflict and show no signs of being brought under control.

The 15,000 crowd in Haiti was also considerably above the average for the Brazilian championship. Sadly, this year's competition has been a relentless, chaotic affair as the CBF attempts to squeeze 46 rounds of matches between late April and mid-December.

Last year, the CBF took a step forward by taking a break on the weekends before internationals. This time, it has taken two steps back by ploughing on through the Copa America and holding full rounds of matches only two or three days before World Cup qualifiers.

When Corinthians and Palmeiras met in the Sao Paulo derby in the 27th round of games, it produced the biggest attendance of the entire competition – a paltry 35,000, not even enough to half fill the Morumbi stadium. But it is difficult to expect any loyalty from fans as clubs buy and sell players virtually non-stop. Although the competition started on April 24, the transfer deadline was not until September 14. In all that time, clubs could buy and sell as many players as they wished.

The Dance of the Coaches was also moving at a truly astonishing pace, with 29 victims in the first 28 rounds of matches.

The highlight was clearly Black Monday, when three of Rio de Janeiro's four clubs lost their coaches overnight. Fluminense fired Ricardo Gomes, Mauro Galvao walked out on Botafogo, and Paulo Cesar Gusmao departed Flamengo, to be replaced by... Ricardo Gomes.

Perhaps the silliest justification for sacking a coach came from Vitoria president Paulo Carneiro after he kicked out Agnaldo Liz. "Agnaldo is an excellent professional, he has our respect and he's a friend of the club, but we needed to motivate the team," he said. And just to give the players even more motivation, Carneiro also dismissed Agnaldo's replacement, Oswaldo de Oliveira, less than three months later.

The coaches are hardly blameless in the story, though. Marco Aurelio simply walked out on Ponte Preta when he was offered a better paid job at Cruzeiro. It was the second time in three years he left Ponte to join Cruzeiro.

"Unfortunately, there are no ethics at all in football. It's really a rotten business," said Ponte Preta vice-president Marco Antonio Eberlin. "And I include myself in that."

Sold by Santos...Diego

Santos topped the national championship table at the start of September despite almost completely rebuilding their team during the course of the contest. In doing so they sold the core of the 2002 title-winning team, including defender Andre (PSV) and midfielders Renato (Sevilla), Diego (FC Porto) and Paulo Almeida (Benfica). Other players to depart were keeper Doni and strikers Leandro Machado and Robson, while coach Emerson Leao was sacked and replaced by Vanderlei Luxemburgo, previously in charge of arch-rivals Cruzeiro.

Meanwhile, in came striker Deivid, who played for Cruzeiro last year, midfielder Ricardinho, who returned to Brazilian football after spending six months at Middlesbrough without getting on to the pitch, Chilean goalkeeper Nelson Tapia, veteran defender Antonio Carlos and midfield bruiser Ze Elias.

'It was a unique sensation... it was superior even to winning the World Cup'

Ronaldo

No more Mr Nice Guy

New national coach Raymond Domenech is not afraid of upsetting the old guard

ERIK BIELDERMAN in Paris

RAYMOND DOMENECH is not an easy-going guy. He may be popular among the media for being a good talker, but he is not the kind of coach who goes out of his way to please his players just for the sake of it.

For more than a decade, Domenech worked as France's Under-21 coach. He didn't appear ready to step up and work with the ageing stars who won the 1998 World Cup and the 2000 European Championship. Now, ironically, since Domenech became France's head coach in July, most of those stars have bid farewell to the national side. Last month Zinedine Zidane joined Lilian Thuram, Marcel Desailly and Bixente Lizarazu in announcing his international retirement.

In what was seen as a politically-correct move, Domenech tried to convince them to stay, but it is clear that the rebuilding of the France team will be an easier task without the old guard. Far from being happy with Domenech's appointment, the 'Zidane orchestra' had supported the candidacy of former team-mate Laurent Blanc.

Domenech was right to be suspicious. After his first game, a 1-1 friendly draw with Bosnia-Herzegovina in Rennes in August, came the first criticism. Fabien Barthez was the first to express his concerns. Initially, there were no words, just dark looks, and the media began to suggest that the keeper might be contemplating quitting the international scene. With speculation mounting, Barthez spoke out, saying: "I will stay till 2006 with France. In Rennes I was not comfortable. So many changes, new rules. Yes, I was shocked. Yes, for a while I thought about retiring. I was down. When you see

Me against the world...Domenech watches his players warm up before the 1-1 draw with Bosnia

Zidane, Thuram, Desailly, Lizarazu, my old mates going, you feel lost yourself. It's the same with the staff, from the coach to the physio and doctors. It's a big change. But after few days thinking about it, I realised that I love playing for France. I love this team and I feel completely at my peak. So why stop?"

New rules

Domenech's new rules referred to by Barthez were rumoured to be: no more luxury hotels; no mobile phones during massage sessions; no training sessions without shinguards; breakfast for everyone at 8.30am; no waiting for players who are late for the team bus; and after each game, each player must analyse and rate his own performance in front of his team-mates.

"We don't mind these changes," is the official line. But behind closed doors it's obvious that the Arsenal players (Robert Pires, Patrick Vieira and Thierry Henry) and some others have not appreciated the new regulations. Like Peguy Luyindula, the new Marseille striker, who overslept and saw the bus going to training without him.

Playing days...Domenech for France

● Raymond Domenech (born 24.01.52) played for Lyon (1970-77), Strasbourg (1977-81), PSG (1981-82), Bordeaux (1982-84) and Mulhouse (1984-85) as a full-back and represented France eight times. His coaching career has taken in Mulhouse (1984-88), Lyon (1988-93) and the French Under-21s (1993-2004).

Pires was upset at not being picked to start against Bosnia. And when he played in the second half he appeared poorly motivated. When asked about it he denied any unhappiness, but he appears unsettled. Jerome Rothen started in place of Pires in Domenech's first competitive game, the home World Cup qualifier against Israel in early September, in which France were held to a 0-0 draw.

Thierry Henry called an official press conference during the build-up to the Israel game, when he spoke about the new rules. "We have to accept them. No doubt about it. I don't want to make any statement regarding the rumours about us."

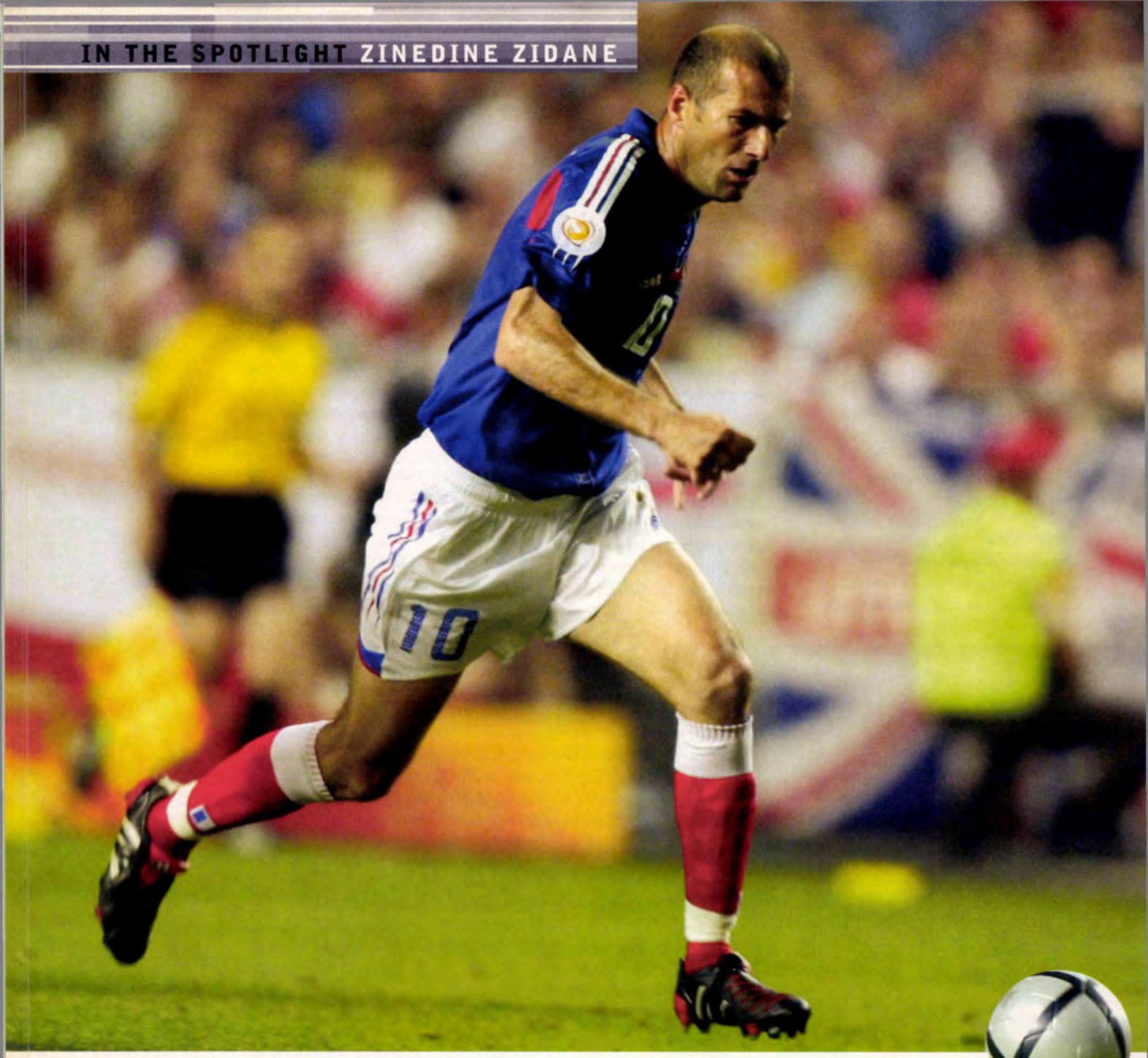
Unhappy Arsenal trio

Henry was referring to suggestions that the Arsenal trio had privately been expressing their dissatisfaction that France were not playing fast, direct football with Zidane at Euro 2004. "Silence is the best answer to those rumours," Henry added.

Domenech does not appear to be worried. He is a self-confident man. He knows that the 1998-2000 generation as a unit is finished. All that remains are some of the individuals.

It seems likely Domenech will build his team around Vieira and Henry, but he knows the defence is the priority. When you lose a back four comprising Thuram, Desailly, Blanc, Lizarazu in such a short period, the rebuilding job is huge. The solution would appear to come from Monaco, with young talents like Gael Givet, Sebastien Squillaci and Patrice Evra convincing in the club's run to last season's Champions League Final. Meanwhile, Domenech is toying with a switch to a new 3-5-2 system, which would be quite unusual for France. "I know that 3-5-2 is a more risky tactic than 4-4-2," Domenech said. "But in life you have to deal with and accept evolution. Those who never want things to change end up as old fools. And I don't want my young players to become old fools."

'In life you have to accept change. Those who never want things to change end up as old fools' *Raymond Domenech*



The long goodbye

Keir Radnedge on why Zizou's international retirement is good news for Real Madrid

EVERY CLOUD HAS a silver lining. Even in football maybe and, more specifically, in the Champions League. That, at least, is the view taken at Real Madrid of Zinedine Zidane's decision to retire from the French national team.

'Zizou' scored 26 goals in 93 internationals for France between August 1994 and this summer's European Championship finals in Portugal, where he tried harder than most to delay the collapse of the French effort in the quarter-final against Greece.

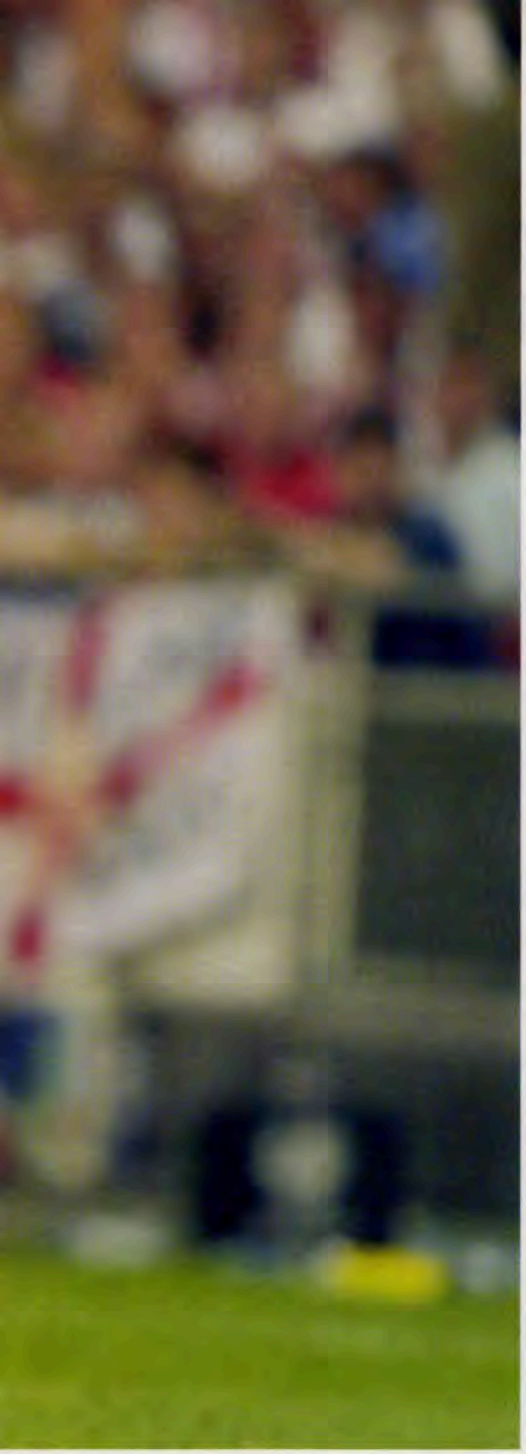
Real Madrid's playmaker refused to make the instant decision to walk away, like team-mates Marcel Desailly, Liliam Thuram and Bixente Lizarazu. In keeping with his character he took the summer break to think over his responsibilities, his achievements and the potential of his next one or two seasons with his Spanish club.

Crocodile tears

Needless to say, Real president Florentino Perez and coach Jose Camacho wept only crocodile tears as Zidane said: "I thought long and hard about this. It was not a decision I took lightly or on the spur of the moment. Also, before I announced it publicly I talked to the people who mattered, people with whom I have worked over the past few years.

"I did not always think it would be a decision I would have to make. I thought that leaving the national team would be something that would occur naturally towards the end of my career. It was not the case so I finally understood that it was up to me to take that step."

Zidane denied that the disappointment of Euro



'The public must realise, as I have had to, that life goes on. Every generation has to give way to the next one'

2004, when France lost their European crown, played a role. He said: "It was not a decision forced on me, for example, by what occurred at Euro 2004. I must say I had been thinking about this before we even went to Portugal. I suppose the only factor after what happened there was that the decision became easier. That is all. We had played together for 10 years, we had won the World Cup in 1998 and the European Championship in 2000 and now that cycle had reached its end."

Zidane revealed that his wife Veronica had a different point of view: "She suggested I should try to carry on playing for France, but inside me I had the feeling that something had gone. It was also a generational issue, with a lot of the backroom staff retiring or moving on. I was a part of their generation which had achieved so much together – also with team-mates like Thuram, Desailly, Lizarazu and some others.

"I talked with them all, at least by phone. There's a link between us because we have been through so much together, mostly very good but also, occasionally, not so good."

Zidane may have been influenced to some degree by the manner in which veteran central defender Desailly fell out of favour. Injury had reduced Desailly's effectiveness during last season and he started only 15 out of 38 Premiership matches in England for Chelsea.

"I think it was disgraceful the way Marcel Desailly was treated at the Euro finals," said Zidane. "He is our record international but he played only in the one game, almost as an afterthought, and he was brought only for the press conferences."

Of course Zidane is more than the best footballer in the world, he has also become a symbol of how a sportsman at the highest level should conduct himself on and off the pitch. He had become a role model whose fame (and fortune) transcended the 'mere' world of national and international football.

After he scored two of France's three goals in their 1998 World Cup Final defeat of Brazil, Zidane was hailed as an emblem of a new, multicultural French nation. This was because he had become a national hero even though his parents were Algerian immigrants, who had come in search of work to Marseille, where Zinedine was born and brought up.

Heavy symbolism

Zidane has sometimes found the weight of being such a symbol heavy to bear. That weight remained an issue for him when he announced his retirement from the French national team. He said: "I do understand – and, anyway, everyone has been telling me! – that in the public eye I have become more than a footballer, a sort of symbol for a lot of people. So, on that basis, I understand that my retirement may disappoint them.

"I can never thank the public enough for all the support I have enjoyed down the years. But they must realise, as I have had to, that life goes on. This is the story of sport. Every generation has to give way to the next one. So I want everyone who has supported me to get behind the new kids who are coming through for France in the same sort of way. There's a World Cup coming up and you can't build a new team for that in a couple of months, it takes a full two years at least.

"It did cross my mind that I could play on. I could have learned to accept that I would not necessarily start every match but that my experience might be useful within the squad and in the dressing-room or on the substitutes' bench. But when I thought about it I also realised that there is a nucleus of players who had come through both at the time of and after we won the World Cup in 1998. It's up to them now to bring their experience into play. I'm thinking of players like Patrick Vieira, Thierry Henry, Claude Makelele, Willy Sagnol, David Trezeguet and Fabien Barthez.

France started the new, post-Zidane era with a new manager in Raymond Domenech. He was appointed to succeed Jacques Santini, who quit as national coach immediately after Euro 2004 to launch a Premiership adventure with Tottenham. Domenech, formerly manager of the French Under-21 team, did try to persuade Zidane to play on but without success.

"I spoke with Domenech, who asked me to carry on playing for France," said Zidane, "and I told him I would think seriously about what he said. But, in the end, it was not enough to change my mind. It was not his decision to take. It was my personal decision."

Media fabrication

Zidane also denied claims that he had allowed himself to be forced out of the French scene through internal opposition from the Arsenal trio of Vieira, Henry and Robert Pires. "This is something the media made up on a day when there was no news around," said Zidane. "It was very disappointing for me to read those stories, which had no truth to them. The team spirit at Euro 2004 was very good. We all got on well, and I have always been a great admirer of those particular Arsenal players and what they have achieved together."

Zidane found a much simpler answer to the question of why France had fallen so disappointingly short of retaining their European crown. He said: "Critics said later that it was because we had underestimated our opponents or that we had not properly replaced players like Didier Deschamps or Manu Petit or Youri Djorkaeff. But that is to miss the point.

"Simply, we did not play well enough when we needed to. In the past we had always been able to raise our game for the big occasion. This time we did not lack anything in terms of talent and ability. But when the Big Day came, we were just not up to it."

That was a criticism that could not have been levelled at Zidane personally. In France's opening match against England it was he who nervelessly turned defeat into victory with two goals – from a free-kick then a penalty – in the last 90 seconds of stoppage time.

But then, Zidane has always been a team player, both out on the pitch and when talking about football. His admirers are just grateful that he will be playing on for Real Madrid and thus extending his international career in the Champions League, at least.

The Spanish club hope to have cause to be even more grateful.

Inter mission

Paddy Agnew reports on the new mood of optimism at Internazionale

LATE LAST JUNE, it was party time aboard Roberto Mancini's private yacht, anchored just off Porto Rotondo, Sardinia. Far from the stress and strain of Euro 2004 in Portugal, Mancini was enjoying his last few days of holiday prior to the start of preparations for the new Serie A season.

At the time, the former international had yet to be officially appointed as the new Internazionale coach (and the 11th of the Massimo Moratti era). However, that did not stop him entertaining Inter striker Christian Vieri with a cool beer up on deck.

Vieri was one of the biggest disappointments (partly due to a knee injury) in Italy's miserable Euro 2004 showing. That, plus a series of public 'disagreements' with the Inter fans last season, had suggested Vieri would be on his way by the end of the summer, bound for either England or Spain. The beer with Mancini must have been good, however, for come the start of the new Serie A campaign, the 31-year-old will be lining up for his sixth consecutive season with Inter.

The feeling among the majority of the Inter squad appears to be that the arrival of Mancini, one of the most talented of the younger generation of Italian coaches, means this season could finally be theirs, that they have a chance of winning the Serie A title for the first time since 1989.

Take Turkish midfielder Emre Belozoglu. He was the subject of serious offers from Arsenal,

'By the end of the 2002-03 season, the word had gone out on the player grapevine – Mancini is your main man'

Barcelona, Besiktas and Galatasaray over the summer, but Emre's response to each was to say that if Inter and Mancini still wanted him, then he was going nowhere.

Argentinian striker Julio Cruz also seemed destined for a move at several points during the summer. But even though the Inter squad has a wealth of strikers – Vieri, Alvaro Recoba, Adriano and Obafemi Martins – Cruz insisted every time that he wanted to stay on.

History lesson

Cruz, Emre and Vieri are familiar with recent Italian football history. They recall how two years ago Mancini took over an essentially dispirited Lazio that had just finished sixth in Serie A, coached by Alberto Zaccheroni.

At the time, critics suggested that players such as Cesar, Stefano Fiore, Claudio Lopez and Dejan Stankovic were either "overrated" or "finished". But under Mancini's inspired coaching all four played some of the best football of their lives as Lazio claimed a fourth-place finish and Champions League qualification. By the end of that season, the word had gone out on the player grapevine – Mancini is your main man.

Initial results at Inter suggest that Mancini could yet pull off what has long looked like Italian football's permanent mission impossible, namely to guide Inter to success. Pre-season friendlies may not mean much but the convincing manner of Inter's 4-1 trouncing of Basle to win a place in the Champions League group stage was enough to put a broad smile on the face of owner Moratti. "You can see that several of our players are still far from fully fit but yet you can still see Mancini's hand, his schemes," he said.

With a three-year contract worth £1.8million per annum, 39-year-old Mancini has not come cheap. Yet his relatively brief coaching career has already been marked with success. His first appointment was at Fiorentina, in spring 2001, leading them to victory in the Italian Cup just a few weeks later.

Success at Lazio

Then, after abandoning that debt-stricken and crisis-bound club midway through the next season, Mancini took up the reins at Lazio for the 2002-03 campaign. This was another club struck by financial crisis and forced to sell talents such as Alessandro Nesta and Hernan Crespo. But despite those departures Mancini regalvanised the players so effectively that not only did Lazio qualify for the Champions League but they also reached the semi-finals of the UEFA Cup (eliminated by eventual winners Porto).

Has Mancini got the qualities that will allow him to succeed where such as Hector Cuper, Mircea Lucescu, Roy Hodgson, Ottavio Bianchi, Marcello Lippi, Gigi Simoni and Marco Tardelli have all failed since 1995? Certainly, he has youth, energy, charisma and an excellent rapport with the players. But lest he had any doubts about the difficulty of the task facing him, Mancini was served with a reminder in mid-August by Zaccheroni, again his immediate predecessor and the man who took over at Inter from Cuper last October.

"This summer, Inter worked along twin tracks," said Zaccheroni. "I was busy getting my side ready for the new season with some of the club management while, elsewhere, Mancini was organising an entirely different Inter along with club director Gabriele Oriali."

Zaccheroni, a Serie A title winner with Milan in 1999, went on to say there was a world of difference between the two Milan clubs "at the level of club organisation", suggesting that AC Milan coaches can count on protection from on high, unlike those at Inter. Zaccheroni went on to suggest that AC Milan is simply a different place, saying: "I know that nothing helps you to win as much as winning itself. Yet when you walk into Milanello [AC Milan's training complex], you have no doubt about where you are. On the walls, all over the place, are photos of the great teams of the past. If you ask a foreigner at Inter, someone like [Andy] Van der Meyde, about Mazzola and Suarez, he has never even heard of them."

Squad strength

Whatever he makes of those warnings, Mancini does at least set out with an immensely strong squad – Adriano, Vieri, Recoba, Cruz, Martins in attack; Stankovic, Edgar Davids, Juan Veron, Ze Maria, Emre, Giorgios Karagounis, Van der Meyde in midfield; Javier Zanetti, Ivan Cordoba, Nicolas Burdisso, Marco Materazzi, Giovanni Pasquale, Giuseppe Favalli and keeper Francesco Toldo in defence.

For what it is worth, my suspicion is that Mancini will prove the exception to the rule and manage to forge a winning unit at Inter, even though the dressing-room has been dominated by player-power and a strong anarchic tendency in recent years. If he fails, then he too can be sure that come this time next year he will be looking for a new job. Perhaps, though, this time the poisoned Inter chalice will not claim another victim.

Not just here for the beer...Vieri is staying on

Back from break point

Keir Radnedge on the recovery of a player suffering unbearable mental pressures

GOOD FORTUNE and Sebastian Deisler have been opponents rather than team-mates for much of the time since he struck a sensational 60-yard first senior goal for Borussia Monchengladbach in March 1999. Ideally, his current club Bayern Munich want Deisler to inspire a repeat of their last Champions League-winning glories of 2001. But whether the 24-year-old can support that pressure is another matter entirely, even though his days of depression and injury appear to be behind him.

The young man once heralded as Germany's 'player of the century' has had to struggle with his own demons, never mind the slings and arrows of out-to-get-him opponents and his own delicate make-up, both physical and psychological.

At source, Deisler's problem is that he had always been too good for his own good – ever since he came to Borussia's attention by scoring more than 200 goals in a season as a 15-year-old with the youth club in his home town of Lorrach, down near the Swiss border.

His father, off work after a heart attack, had the time to take Sebastian to all his matches on the family motorbike. But the fortune of the boy's talent was countered by the fragility of his physique. For example, Deisler underwent two knee operations in quick succession in the autumn of 1998 before he had even made his first-team debut.

He was barely 19 when he struck that 'goal of the season'. Immediately this shy, quietly-spoken teenager was lionised by a hungry media as the miracle worker to reinvigorate a fading national team scarred by World Cup quarter-final failures in both 1994 and 1998.

"I'd played 14 League games and was being described as the messiah of German football," recalled Deisler recently. "It was ridiculous."

Not that anyone cared for the long-term consequences. Quick and clever, Deisler was a German David Beckham with his inch-perfect right-wing crosses and free-kicks. More than 20 clubs from Germany, England, Italy and Spain sent emissaries to his parents' home. One of them was Bayern Munich coach Ottmar Hitzfeld, himself from Lorrach and an old school friend of Deisler's father.

But Bayern would be a step too far, the family decided. He had been homesick in Monchengladbach, especially after further knee surgery in April 1999. Instead, Deisler signed for Hertha Berlin. It was a disastrous choice. His image would have travelled ahead of him anywhere he went but might not have been devoured by quite as many expectant admirers. In Berlin some 76,000 fans filled the Olympiastadion for his debut that August. They had not only been told all about 'Basti Fantasti' but had bought up all available No 26 shirts in honour of their new *Fussballprinz*.

One month later, in September 1999, national team boss Erich Ribbeck summoned Deisler for senior German duty. Typically, he had to cry off with

a thigh strain and did not get an international run-out until appearing in a 2-1 defeat against forthcoming European Championship co-hosts Holland six months later.

At the 2000 finals Deisler played without wit or sparkle. The blame lay with a groin muscle tear that had required springtime surgery. He had played only 20 League games before going to the European finals, and not surprisingly was unable to inspire a depressingly poor German side.

Ribbeck was replaced by Rudi Voller, who hoped the youthful exuberance of Deisler and Michael Ballack would rejuvenate Germany for the 2002 World Cup. Again injury cut in. Ballack went to Korea and Japan and performed superbly; Deisler, frustrated, watched on television back home as he convalesced after more knee surgery.

Dream turns bad

Consolation was confirmation of a £7million move to Bayern Munich. But the appearance of a dream transfer proved deceptive. For one thing, reports of a lucrative pre-contract down-payment infuriated Hertha fans. Secondly, Deisler's slim shoulders were again laden with a crushing weight of expectation.

Further knee trouble meant he played a mere eight League matches in Bayern's 2002-03 Bundesliga-winning campaign, and he started the next season still tired and pressured.

On November 9, 2003, he scored twice in a 4-1 win over Borussia Dortmund before limping off with a muscle strain. This was the Deisler for whom German football had been waiting. But the following Tuesday Bayern's general manager, Uli Hoeness, was surprised by the reaction after asking his secretary to book Deisler for an Adidas promotional date. Deisler wanted to talk to him. Hoeness picked up the phone and was shocked by the almost unrecognisable voice. Immediately he called Hitzfeld. The two drove to Deisler's apartment to find the player almost incapable of opening the door to them. The weight of expectation had destroyed him as both footballer and human being.

Within days Deisler had been admitted to the Max-Planck psychiatric institute to be treated for clinical depression. This being FC Hollywood, the whispers soon began. Bayern realised they could not hush this up. With Deisler's permission the club went public.

Deisler was not the only victim of depression. Weeks earlier a similar breakdown had caught up with Hannover's Czech midfielder Jan Simak. He had flown home on family business and gone missing. It was more than a fortnight before Hannover caught up with him and could arrange treatment.

"We don't want anything like that," said Hoeness. "There is a problem with Deisler's health and it is being treated in the best possible way. I do not want to read reports of pampered superstars. This is a human issue we're talking about."

Expecting diplomatic sensitivity from the tabloid media was too much, of course. Deisler spent nine weeks in clinical seclusion while fans read increasingly baffling reports about his so-called friends, who were reportedly keeping even Hoeness and Bayern's own medical staff at bay.

In January 2004 Deisler's girlfriend Eunice gave birth to a son, Raphael. The following week, unannounced, the midfielder turned up at Bayern's Sabener-strasse complex to start training with the rest of the squad. He even faced up to the media, saying: "I've got my desire for football back again, not that it ever really went away. I've been a long time away and I've missed the game. I'm carrying too many kilos and it will take a few weeks to get match fit but I am happy to be back on the pitch.

"We've also had a son in the meantime, which has been a beautiful experience, and I'm enjoying life again. It's given me renewed motivation."

In fact it was not until mid-May that Deisler returned to Bundesliga action, as a substitute in a 3-1 defeat by Stuttgart. By that time Bayern had been knocked out of the Champions League by Real Madrid and the German Cup and been left behind by Werder Bremen in the League. But as Deisler put it: "Just playing in the team, in front of the fans again, was the big prize for me."

Of course he missed the German debacle at Euro 2004 and was happy about that. "Not," said Deisler, "because it went badly for Germany but because, for the first time in four years, I was able to enjoy a full four-week summer holiday. Now I'm feeling the benefits."

Not surprisingly, fit-again Deisler was one of the first players new manager Jurgen Klinsmann wanted for Germany's August friendly in Austria. New Bayern coach Felix Magath talked Klinsmann out of it, not because he feared the effect of renewed expectation but "because Deisler needs time to get his game and his fitness back together. Anyway, there will be plenty more chances before the 2006 World Cup."

Spring in his step...Deisler is back in action

Deisler can smile now at public reaction to his every move. When he collapsed in a pre-season League Cup tie against Werder Bremen, he sensed the unanimous intake of breath around the stadium. Later he laughed: "I knew exactly what people were thinking: 'Good grief, not Deisler's knee again!'"

Happy return

No serious damage had been done, though Deisler conceded: "There were moments in my first games back when I was conscious of thinking about the injuries. But I have learned to turn it around in my mind. Now I enjoy every moment out on the pitch because I am there despite all the injuries.

"My dream is to play a full season without serious injury and build up a match-by-match momentum for almost the first time in my career. It helps a lot being in a super team at Bayern. I think Michael [Ballack] and Torsten [Frings] and I understand each other's game perfectly. It's becoming automatic how we cover for each other if the one goes forward or one of us fills an attacking space confident that the others will hold back.

"Hopefully we'll make it work for both Bayern in the League and Champions League, and then for Germany in the World Cup. First we want to show who is the No 1 in Germany and go as far as possible in the Champions League. Then there's my long-term target – 2006. I'm sure we'll have a fabulous team by then."

Bayern fans, of course, have those more immediate challenges in mind. But the 'new' Deisler will take all the time he needs. He has learned that lesson the hard way.

'Now I enjoy every moment out on the pitch because I am there despite all the injuries'

Ours to keep!

Arsenal's Swedish midfielder says retaining the Premiership title is the priority this season

Is there any truth in the rumours that you came close to leaving Arsenal during the summer?

I have released statements confirming I have no intention of leaving and stand by that. I have never spoken to the manager about joining another club and enjoy playing here very, very much. We had a successful season last time and it always seems to spark off fresh rumours that the best players are going to move on. There is nothing we can do about it. I always say it is an honour to be linked with big clubs, but I have no reason to leave Arsenal.

Arsenal won the championship unbeaten last season. How can you better that?

You always need to have a motivation to develop yourself and improve. Last season was very special and to go through the entire Premiership campaign without losing a game was something incredible. It would be hard to better that this time, but we have to be very focused if we want to defend our championship. Chelsea and Manchester United will be stronger this time, and we have to be ready for them. If we retain the Premiership title and lose a few games along the way, we will all be very happy, that's for sure.

Chelsea have made a host of new signings for the second summer running. Are they ready to win the Premiership?

I'm not so sure. Chelsea have bought a lot of great players, they have a new manager in charge and look to have the strength in depth they will need to win the League. However, I still see Manchester United as our biggest threat. United have the experience of winning this League time and time again; Chelsea don't have that yet. They are bringing in players from abroad and it may take time for them to settle.

Do Chelsea have too many star players in their squad to develop a winning team spirit?

They certainly do things differently to Arsenal. Under [Claudio] Ranieri, Chelsea had one team for the Champions League and another for the Premiership. As far as I'm concerned, such a policy would never work, and in the end they fell short. Here, we try to build around one main team and develop the spirit you need to have a successful team. If someone is tired, then you can change things, but doing it every game for the sake of it doesn't seem the right way to go for me. Jose Mourinho has a much bigger squad than we do, so it will not be easy for him to keep everyone happy.

Is Champions League success a priority this season?

Our priority is to retain the Premiership, ahead of winning the Champions League. The boss has said he wants us to dominate in England, and if we can do that then Europe may come along as well. But when you think about how close we came last season it does make us hungry for the Champions League. We had the chance to beat Chelsea, and if we had gone through to the semi-finals, there was a good chance to win the competition. There is a passion to do well in Europe, but success in England remains the most important for me.

Are you jaded after Euro 2004?

Mr Wenger gave us some extra time off to recover after the tournament, allowing us to come back to training with Arsenal close to the start of the new season. We have to work our way into the campaign.

How do you reflect on Sweden's Euro 2004 effort?

It was not a success in the way the players wanted it to be. We played well at times and had a chance to go a long way in the competition, so losing on penalties [to Holland, in the quarter-finals] was very hard to take. We played very well against the Dutch, had the chances to win, and it slipped through our fingers. The fans may have been happy with our displays, but we wanted more. I was very down for a couple of weeks and didn't want to think about football, but once you come back to your club it has to be forgotten and life moves on.

Interview by Kevin Palmer

'I still see Manchester United as our biggest threat'

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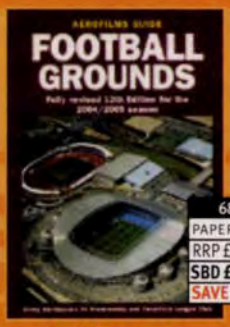

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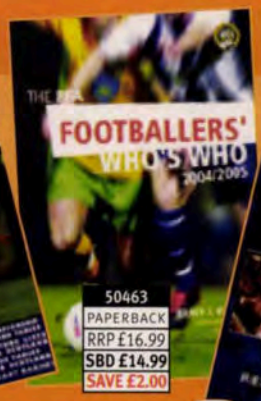

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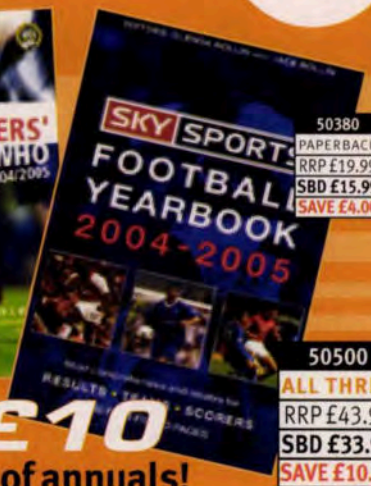

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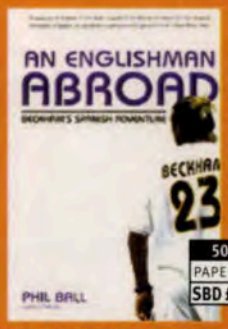

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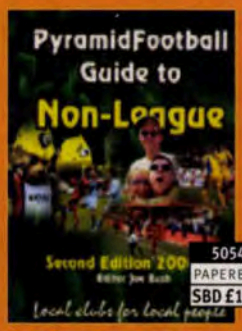

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All's well in Europe...UEFA president Lennart Johansson introduces the Champions League draw

More of the same, please!

Gavin Hamilton reports from Monaco on this season's Champions League draw

"MONEY IS THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL." So declared UEFA president Lennart Johansson in Monaco, where the great and the good of European football had gathered to launch this season's Champions League with the draw, gala dinner and European Supercup match.

Johansson was not referring to the Champions League. Instead, he was discussing the case of Scott Parker, whose £10 million transfer to Chelsea last season deprived Charlton of their best player, only for Parker, on the brink of an England career, to then find himself stuck in Chelsea's reserves. Money often causes more problems than it solves.

For Johansson, the Champions League is the exception that proves the rule. The UEFA Cup has been rebranded, with a new group-stage format. The 40 qualifying teams will be divided into eight pools of five, each side playing two home games and two away games. It is a convoluted attempt to revive a flagging competition.

In contrast, its swankier brother, the Champions League, will continue in its successful slimmed-down version. UEFA is happy with the recent switch to a single group stage format. "We have shown that less is more," says chief executive Lars-Christer Olsson. "Clubs can still earn as much money, if not more, from playing fewer matches."

Last year, the 32 competing clubs shared 631 million Swiss francs (£278m). This season, the figure will rise to 640m Swiss francs (£282m). Those figures, though, are down on the peak of two years ago, when clubs shared £340m.

In the 2004-05 competition, each participant will receive £2.43m just for taking part in all six group matches. For each win, they receive an additional £220,000, with £110,000 for a draw.

Reaching the knockout stage earns each club another £1.1m, with quarter-finalists receiving an extra £1.325m and semi-finalists an additional £1.767m. As for Final prize money, the winners receive £4.418m while the runners-up get £2.65m.

Then there is what is known as the "pool money", cash distributed to clubs on the basis of the size of their country's TV market. Essentially, this is where the inequality of the Champions League kicks in. The bigger and wealthier the TV market, the more cash clubs from that country receive from UEFA's TV pot.

It explains why Chelsea, beaten semi-finalists last season, topped the revenue charts (see panel) with £19.454m, compared to the £13.244m received by eventual winners Porto.

Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester United were helped by Newcastle's failure to qualify for the group stage. The English TV pool money was thus spread among three clubs rather than four.

The big clubs may be happy with the current arrangements, but that was not always the case. Johansson recalled that the Champions League almost never got off the ground because of opposition from Milan owner (and now Italian prime minister) Silvio Berlusconi in the early 1990s.

It was only after a two-hour meeting at Berlusconi's Swiss holiday home that matters were resolved. "That meeting was crucial in the birth of the new format," said Johansson. "After those two hours, he was in favour of the new competition. He could see how it was going to be good for his business."

Big clubs to fight back?

On the pitch, last year's change of format was a resounding success. The removal of the second group stage comfort zone and the introduction of an extra knockout round helped to produce more upsets, with Porto and Monaco forming a totally unexpected Final line-up.

This season, the suspicion is that the big clubs will fight back. Bayern Munich, Juventus and Real Madrid have new coaches – Felix Magath, Fabio Capello and Jose Antonio Camacho, respectively – all with a brief to sweep out the complacency that crept into their clubs last term.

Barcelona, Manchester United and Internazionale have all made major changes in personnel. It will be fascinating to see how Frank Rijkaard incorporates Ludovic Giuly and Deco, two of the stars of last season's competition, into a Barca line-up where Ronaldinho is already the star attraction. Similarly, how often will Wayne Rooney be showcased on those atmospheric European nights at Old Trafford?

Chelsea, meanwhile, have carried on spending. Their new coach, Jose Mourinho, earned a fearsome reputation when winning the Champions League last season with Porto, but his experience of success in the competition may not be enough to take Chelsea on to a first Final. Chelsea must also contend with growing controversy over owner Roman Abramovich's sponsorship of Group H rivals CSKA Moscow.

Kings of Europe ...Porto celebrate their Final triumph last season but the odds are against a repeat this time

following Deco's departure, but the team clearly missed his vision and creativity in the 2-1 defeat by UEFA Cup holders Valencia.

So far, 2004 has been a rewarding year for UEFA. The victories of Porto and Greece in the flagship competitions have helped rebut criticism that the governing body favours only the rich and powerful.

Euro 2004 generated a huge surplus, much of which will be enjoyed by countries whose

'Clubs can still earn as much money, if not more, from playing fewer matches'

UEFA chief executive Lars-Christer Olsson

UEFA's swift investigation found no proof that Abramovich owns a stake in CSKA, but Olsson admitted in Monaco that UEFA may have to introduce rules to prevent such conflicts of interest appearing in future.

Two teams who made few changes in the summer, Arsenal and Milan, will be the ones to beat this time round. And what of Porto? Lightning is unlikely to strike twice, certainly not if their Supercup performance is anything to go by. New coach Victor Fernandez has spent heavily club champions have been squeezed out of a European Cup where it is taken for granted that TV is the master and the clubs the servants.

Johansson and Olsson could even afford to brush aside the claims of the G-14 group of elite clubs, who threatened to break away and form their own 'superleague' a few years ago.

"What are the G-14? How many of them are there?" asked Johansson. "Why aren't they the G-46? They are important clubs, but they are part of a larger family. There is no need for the G-14."

LAST SEASON'S PRIZE MONEY WINNERS

	£m
Chelsea	19.454
Arsenal	19.110
Manchester United	18.773
Monaco	17.706
Porto	13.244
Real Madrid	13.150
Lyon	13.146
Bayern Munich	13.022
Deportivo La Coruna	12.446
Stuttgart	12.302
Milan	11.974
Juventus	10.202
Real Sociedad	9.839
Celta Vigo	8.213
Internazionale	7.598
Marseille	6.607
Lazio	6.376
PSV Eindhoven	6.330
Ajax	5.701
Celtic	5.063
Rangers	5.061
Lokomotiv Moscow	4.984
Besiktas	4.281
Olympiakos	4.271
Sparta Prague	4.264
Galatasaray	4.157
Panathinaikos	4.078
Club Brugge	3.907
Anderlecht	3.719
AEK Athens	3.679
Kyiv Dynamo	3.229
Partizan Belgrade	2.855

GROUP MATCH SCHEDULE

Top two from each group qualify for knockout stages; third-placed sides enter UEFA Cup

GROUP A

DEPORTIVO LA CORUNA (SPA)
LIVERPOOL (ENG)
MONACO (FRA)
OLYMPIAKOS (GRE)

Wed, September 15
Deportivo v Olympiakos
Liverpool v Monaco
Tue, September 28
Monaco v Deportivo
Olympiakos v Liverpool
Tue, October 19
Liverpool v Deportivo
Monaco v Olympiakos
Wed, November 3
Deportivo v Liverpool
Olympiakos v Monaco
Tue, November 23
Monaco v Liverpool
Olympiakos v Deportivo
Wed, December 8
Deportivo v Monaco
Liverpool v Olympiakos

GROUP B

BAYER LEVERKUSEN (GER)
KYIV DYNAMO (UKR)
REAL MADRID (SPA)
ROMA (ITA)

Wed, September 15
Leverkusen v Real Madrid
Roma v Kyiv Dynamo
Tue, September 28
Kyiv Dynamo v Leverkusen
Real Madrid v Roma
Tue, October 19
Leverkusen v Roma
Real Madrid v Kyiv Dynamo
Wed, November 3
Kyiv Dynamo v Real Madrid
Roma v Leverkusen
Tue, November 23
Kyiv Dynamo v Roma
Real Madrid v Leverkusen
Wed, December 8
Leverkusen v Kyiv Dynamo
Roma v Real Madrid

GROUP C

AJAX (HOL)
BAYERN MUNICH (GER)
JUVENTUS (ITA)
MACCABI TEL AVIV (ISR)

Wed, September 15
Ajax v Juventus
Maccabi Tel Aviv v Bayern Munich
Tue, September 28
Bayern Munich v Ajax
Juventus v Maccabi Tel Aviv
Tue, October 19
Ajax v Maccabi Tel Aviv
Juventus v Bayern Munich
Wed, November 3
Bayern Munich v Juventus
Maccabi Tel Aviv v Ajax
Tue, November 23
Bayern Munich v Maccabi Tel Aviv
Juventus v Ajax
Wed, December 8
Ajax v Bayern Munich
Maccabi Tel Aviv v Juventus

GROUP D

FENERBAHCE (TUR)
LYON (FRA)
MANCHESTER UNITED (ENG)
SPARTA PRAGUE (CZE)

Wed, September 15
Fenerbahce v Sparta Prague
Lyon v Manchester Utd
Tue, September 28
Manchester Utd v Fenerbahce
Sparta Prague v Lyon
Tue, October 19
Fenerbahce v Lyon
Sparta Prague v Manchester Utd
Wed, November 3
Lyon v Fenerbahce
Manchester Utd v Sparta Prague
Tue, November 23
Manchester Utd v Lyon
Sparta Prague v Fenerbahce
Wed, December 8
Fenerbahce v Manchester Utd
Lyon v Sparta Prague

GROUP E

ARSENAL (ENG)
PANATHINAIKOS (GRE)
PSV EINDHOVEN (HOL)
ROSENBORG (NOR)

Tue, September 14
Arsenal v PSV
Panathinaikos v Rosenborg
Wed, September 29
PSV v Panathinaikos
Rosenborg v Arsenal
Wed, October 20
Panathinaikos v Arsenal
Rosenborg v PSV
Tue, November 2
Arsenal v Panathinaikos
PSV v Rosenborg
Wed, November 24
PSV v Arsenal
Rosenborg v Panathinaikos
Tue, December 7
Arsenal v Rosenborg
Panathinaikos v PSV

GROUP F

BARCELONA (SPA)
CELTIC (SCO)
MILAN (ITA)
SHAKHTAR DONETSK (UKR)

Tue, September 14
Celtic v Barcelona
Shakhtar v Milan
Wed, September 29
Barcelona v Shakhtar
Milan v Celtic
Wed, October 20
Milan v Barcelona
Shakhtar v Celtic
Tue, November 2
Barcelona v Milan
Celtic v Shakhtar
Wed, November 24
Barcelona v Celtic
Milan v Shakhtar
Tue, December 7
Celtic v Milan
Shakhtar v Barcelona

GROUP G

ANDERLECHT (BLG)
INTERNAZIONALE (ITA)
VALENCIA (SPA)
WERDER BREMEN (GER)

Tue, September 14
Inter v Werder Bremen
Valencia v Anderlecht
Wed, September 29
Anderlecht v Inter
Werder Bremen v Valencia
Wed, October 20
Anderlecht v Werder Bremen
Valencia v Inter
Tue, November 2
Werder Bremen v Anderlecht
Inter v Valencia
Wed, November 24
Anderlecht v Valencia
Werder Bremen v Inter
Tue, December 7
Inter v Anderlecht
Valencia v Werder Bremen

GROUP H

CHELSEA (ENG)
CSKA MOSCOW (RUS)
PARIS SAINT-GERMAIN (FRA)
FC PORTO (POR)

Tue, September 14
Porto v CSKA Moscow
PSG v Chelsea
Wed, September 29
Chelsea v Porto
CSKA Moscow v PSG
Wed, October 20
Chelsea v CSKA Moscow
PSG v Porto
Tue, November 2
CSKA Moscow v Chelsea
Porto v PSG
Wed, November 24
Chelsea v PSG
CSKA Moscow v Porto
Tue, December 7
Porto v Chelsea
PSG v CSKA Moscow

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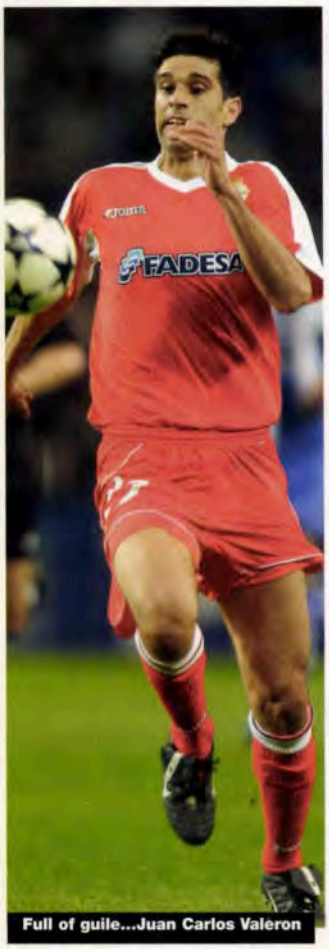
Deportivo La Coruna

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Quietly, as usual. Third in the League – their fifth successive top-four finish – Depor arrived in the group stage via a qualifying win over Irish side Shelbourne.

STADIUM
Riazor (capacity 35,000), situated right on the beach. The renovation is complete – for now at least. The running track has gone, allowing fans to get much closer to the action in what is now an enclosed arena, with all but the front few rows covered. This is lucky, as it always, always rains in Galicia.

COACH
Javier Irureta. A lovely bloke and the most successful coach in Depor's history, but somehow he has never quite managed to win over the fans. Wears a Depor cagoule come rain or shine and munches on the same piece of gum all day long – he's been caught sticking it under the desk during press conferences, resuming chewing afterwards, and dropping it on the Riazor turf, picking it up, rinsing it off and popping it right back in his mouth.



Full of guile...Juan Carlos Valeron

HOW THEY LINE UP

POWERBROKER
Augusto Cesar Lendoiro. Having built the world's best roller-hockey team, Lendoiro then turned his attention to Deportivo, 15 years ago, when they were in the Second Division. Looks cuddly but is a notoriously hard negotiator.

TACTICS
4-2-3-1. For ever and ever, amen. Irureta has been unfairly criticised for his inflexibility, his settling for draws, and his refusal to play two out-and-out strikers. Mauro Silva holds the side together, Juan Carlos Valeron provides the guile, while Alberto Luque and Victor bomb up the wings, supported by the full-backs – few teams use width quite like Depor.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
All too often, Depor defeat themselves. Otherwise, pace is the key – Jorge Andrade apart, Depor are far from quick at the back. It's also hard to avoid the conclusion that the side may just be reaching the end of a cycle; the immense Mauro Silva has already announced that this will be his last season.

DON'T MENTION...
New signings. There aren't any, and you'd get ignored anyway. Irureta was.

LOOK OUT FOR
Valeron and his comic-book, slow-motion creativity. And Irureta's chewing gum.

PREDICTION
One fabulous result will get everyone talking, then they'll blow it with one awful half – just when it really, really matters.

Liverpool

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
After finishing fourth in the League they scraped through their third round qualifying tie against Austria's Grazer AK, 2-1 on aggregate.

STADIUM
Anfield (capacity 45,362). The Kop still tries its hardest to be Liverpool's 12th man, but the rapidly progressing plans for a new 60,000 stadium in nearby Stanley Park are proof that Liverpool need a bigger capacity if they are to keep pace with Man Utd and Chelsea.

COACH
Rafael Benitez. A UEFA Cup and Spanish League title winner with Valencia who has already stamped his authority on Anfield with the sale of Michael Owen to Real Madrid and the signing of no fewer than four fellow Spaniards.

POWERBROKER
Rick Parry, a former accountant who became chief executive of the fledgling Premier League before joining Liverpool in a similar capacity. Sharp on commercial deals, particularly TV.

TACTICS
Benitez favoured two holding midfielders at Valencia, so Steven Gerrard is likely to play alongside new signing Xabi Alonso. In attack, Djibril Cisse and Milan Baros are the preferred pairing; at the back, Jamie Carragher can fill a number of positions.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Stephane Henchoz and Sami Hyypia were a strong central defensive pairing when Liverpool won the 2001 UEFA Cup, but are slowing down.

DON'T MENTION...
The attempts by Thai Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra and businessman Steve Morgan to buy stakes in the club.

LOOK OUT FOR
Darren Potter. A promising young midfielder and one of the few locally-born players in the squad.

PREDICTION
Reaching the last 16 would be a big achievement given the tough draw, the summer upheaval at Anfield and the priority placed on domestic success.

Forward march...Milan Baros

Monaco

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By beating Gorica of Slovenia 9-0 on aggregate in the third qualifying round. They were French League pacesetters but fell away after being distracted by their march to the Champions League Final and finished only third.

STADIUM
Louis II (capacity 18,000). A mini arena fit for a Monegasque prince built on land reclaimed from the Mediterranean. But genuine local fans are a rare breed.

COACH
Didier Deschamps. The 35-year-old former France captain and midfield warhorse is now an outstanding coach. Even as a teenage debutant for Nantes, his leadership and tactical awareness shone through.

POWERBROKER
Michel Pastor. The property developer, one of Europe's richest men, recently took over from Pierre Svara as club president. In Svara's 12 months in charge, Monaco's debts were slashed from £40 to £3million. Pastor should soon have the club back in the black.

TACTICS
Deschamps has swapped his usual 4-4-2 for a 4-3-3 after losing key wide playmakers Ludovic Giuly and Jerome Rothen, to Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain respectively. The first-choice midfield – Akis Zikos, Lucas Bernardi and new signing Diego Perez – are basically a defensive unit

HOW THEY LINE UP

charged with covering, pressing and tackling. Up front, on-loan Javier Saviola will link with Emmanuel Adebayor and Mohamed Kallon.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Centre-backs Sebastien Squillaci and Gael Givet are strong in the air and tackle, but prone to be easily turned.

DON'T MENTION...
Monaco's tax-lite regime, which gives them an unfair advantage over other French clubs. Or that they came perilously close to bankruptcy and relegation in the summer of 2003.

LOOK OUT FOR
Maicon, the cultured Brazilian right-back from Cruzeiro. Also, midfielder Jaroslav Plasil, a young Czech with abundant drive and easy technique.

PREDICTION
Without the stars who took Monaco to the Final last season, a repeat is unthinkable. But Deschamps' strategic and motivational skills can never be underestimated, and a second round spot is still a possibility.

Midfield power unit...Diego Perez

Olympiakos

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Directly, even though they missed out on the Greek championship after seven consecutive titles. Finished two points adrift of Panathinaikos.

STADIUM
Karaiskaki (capacity 33,334). Just a goal-kick away from the Piraeus shoreline, and tastefully redeveloped for the Olympics. The atmosphere will be boisterous on Champions League nights.

COACH
Dusan Bayevic. The former Yugoslavia striker was re-installed at the controls this summer and will be hoping to repeat the success he enjoyed in his first spell at the club (1996-2000), when he steered them to three League titles. Can play the disciplinarian – he once heavily fined the players for a poor performance in a pre-season friendly.

POWERBROKER
Socrates Kokkalis. Germany-educated mobile phone tycoon who took charge of the club's basketball section in 1991 and moved to football chairmanship two years later

TACTICS
Bayevic prefers a fluid 4-5-1, with Brazilian Giovanni likely to be the sole front-runner, Yiannakis Okkas (ex-AEK Athens) or Mexican Nery Alberto Castillo just behind him, and headline summer signing Rivaldo given a free rein. Ieroklis Stoltidis

HOW THEY LINE UP

and Dimitrios Mavrogenidis provide the midfield ballast.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Pressurise new keeper Antonis Nikopolidis (ex-Panathinaikos). He was superbly protected by a well-organised Greek defence at Euro 2004 but even then it was clear he is not the best at coming for crosses. The defence lacks pace.

DON'T MENTION...
The fans gripes about how a high-profile coach should have been appointed instead of Bayevic. Also, AEK Athens blocking Olympiakos' bid to sign international centre-back Michalis Kapsis.

LOOK OUT FOR
Kostas Mendrinos, a technically-assured and confident Under-21 full-back. Also Castillo, a wonderfully exciting prospect in midfield.

PREDICTION
Finished bottom of their Champions League group with just four points last term, and a similar anti-climax seems likely this time around.

Lone spearhead...Giovanni

Bayer Leverkusen

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By snatching third place in the Bundesliga and then beating Czech side Banik Ostrava 6-2 on aggregate in the third qualifying round.

STADIUM
BayArena (capacity 22,500). A neat, attractive and functional ground with all mod cons. However, its small capacity and the club's family-oriented fan base makes it far from a bear pit.

COACH
Klaus Augenthaler. Was the most intense of competitors during his time as a libero for Bayern Munich and Germany, and has not changed his ways since turning to coaching. Gruff, demanding and, above all, a winner.

POWERBROKER
Wolfgang Holzhauser. The financial director was supposed to leave the club this summer to work at the German League, only to abandon the idea when appointed to succeed long-serving Reiner Calmund as chief executive. Quickly asserted his authority, blocking attempts by some board members to re-install Rudi Voller as sports director.

TACTICS
Although Augenthaler has often employed a 4-4-2 in the past, he now seems happier with a 3-5-2, with sweeper and captain Jens Nowotny flanked by two man-markers, and workhorse Carsten Ramelow in front of them. New signing Paul Freier is the only real candidate for the right midfield berth, but there is competition for places on the left, with Jacek Krzynowek, Marko Babic, Daniel Bierofka and Diego

HOW THEY LINE UP

Placente all in the frame. Bernd Schneider and Robson Ponte provide the craft and control the tempo in the middle. Strike partners Dimitar Berbatov and Franca came of age last season.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Apart from the excellent Brazilian defender Juan, the Leverkusen back line is by no means a rock solid unit. Keeper Hans-Jorg Butt's best days are behind him; Nowotny lacks pace and has been plagued by knee trouble for the best part of three years; and new boy Roque Junior is notoriously careless.

DON'T MENTION...
Plans to reduce player wages by 50 per cent by 2007; Holzhauser's complaints that the supposedly retired Calmund is still meddling in club affairs; the broken leg recently suffered by promising young right-back Clemens Fritz.

LOOK OUT FOR
Teenagers Sascha Dum, a full-back, and Jan-Ingwer Callsen-Bracker, a stopper.

PREDICTION
The class of Franca, Berbatov and Robson Ponte, and the team's fluid attacking style will trouble many an opponent. But the team may not have the strength in depth to progress from the group.

Classy...Robson Ponte (left)

Kyiv Dynamo

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By winning the Ukrainian League and then scraping a 3-2 aggregate victory over Trabzonspor of Turkey in the third qualifying round.

STADIUM
Olympiyskyi (capacity 78,000), otherwise known as the Republican or the Market – Kiev's two biggest markets are located behind either end of the ground. The stadium is rented for the Champions League group matches because Dynamo's home stadium has a capacity of only 18,000.

COACH
Jozef Szabo, who took over in a temporary capacity after the recent dismissal of Olexiy Mikhailichenko. The 64-year-old, who has recently been a vice-president at the club, was previously coach of the club in the 1990s and is a former Dynamo player.

POWERBROKER
Ihor Surkis, the club's president, whose authority is based on his family's power within Ukrainian football – his older brother, Grigoriy, a former Dynamo president himself, is Ukrainian federation president and a member of UEFA's executive committee.

Pivotal...Valentin Bialkevich

HOW THEY LINE UP

TACTICS
The choice on formation depends on the availability of playmaker Valentin Bialkevich, who is currently injured. When the Belorussian is fit, he directs most of the team's attacking efforts, adding invention to the moves but at the same time slowing them down. Without Bialkevich, Dynamo's 4-4-2 formation is based on utility midfielders Jerko Leko, Georgi Peev, Tiberiu Ghioane and Diogo Rincon. Their main task is to put pressure on the opposition midfield and, when they get the ball, to pass it as quickly as possible to forwards Maris Verpakovskis and Maxim Shatskikh (Kleber is an option). Moroccan left-back Badr El-Kaddouri is also a very important element because of his effectiveness in attack as well as defence.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Bialkevich can be vulnerable when up against aggressive and pacy opponents, but the weakest area of the team is central defence. Neither of the first-choices – Goran Sablic and Goran Gavrancic – nor back-up Serhii Fedorov has a good positional sense and tend to struggle for pace when up against speedy forwards.

DON'T MENTION...
The pressure inside the boardroom connected with their search for a new long-term coach.

LOOK OUT FOR
Verpakovskis, the Latvian forward nicknamed Sparky. A bargain buy last winter from Skonto Riga, he offers great speed and a precise shot. Also, Dantas Rodolfo, a 21-year-old Brazilian bought from Fluminense who is in the Dynamo tradition of ball-winning midfielders.

PREDICTION
Szabo can definitely find the right words for his multilingual boys but there are doubts about whether that will be enough for Dynamo to progress into the knockout stages.

Real Madrid

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
With their tails between their legs. Madrid lost their last five League games to finish fourth last term, and were forced into the ignominy of an August Champions League qualifier against Wisla Krakow. This put a bit of a hole in their Far Eastern tour.

STADIUM
Santiago Bernabeu (capacity 80,000), utterly magnificent and, these days, always full; but too often too quiet.

COACH
Tub-thumping, no-nonsense ex-Madrid defender and Spain coach Jose Antonio Camacho, the man charged with getting the supposedly pampered *galacticos* working again.

POWERBROKER
Florentino Perez. Madrid's president decides who comes, who goes and who plays. His dream of world domination turned into a nightmare last season but still he remained invincible. Or so it seemed; he finally got a bloody nose with rejections from Thierry Henry and Ruud Van Nistelrooy. For some reason, he decided not to pay Patrick Vieira as a *galactico* and missed out on him too.

TACTICS
Come off it. Just give the ball to Zidane. Or Ronaldo. Or Figo.

HOW THEY LINE UP

Supposedly 4-2-3-1, but Zidane doesn't really play on the left, Roberto Carlos doesn't really play at the back, and when was the last time Madrid had only one up front?

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Get at them. Be aggressive and fast. Exploit the space behind Roberto Carlos. And hope Ronaldo's injured – Madrid still rely heavily on his goals.

DON'T MENTION...
Last season. Or anyone who's not a *galactico*.

LOOK OUT FOR
You're joking, aren't you?

PREDICTION
Anything other than a 10th European Cup would be a disappointment for Madridistas. They won't fancy facing Juventus, Bayern or Valencia, though, and injuries in central midfield or at the back would be keenly felt.

All-important goals...Ronaldo

Roma

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Directly, after finishing runners-up to Milan in the Italian League.

STADIUM
Olympic (capacity 82,307). Like many of the venues refurbished for the 1990 World Cup, it's starting to show its age.

COACH
Rudi Voller. Ex-German international striker and Roma old boy who oversaw Germany's poor performance at Euro 2004. Has never coached at club level before, having been sports director at Bayer Leverkusen. Has agreed a one-year deal as cover for Cesare Prandelli, who is on leave tending his seriously ill wife.

POWERBROKER
Franco Sensi. Still club president but at the age of 78, and with Roma saddled by huge debts, he is looking to sell out to the right buyer.

TACTICS
Voller has indicated he will play 4-4-2, which suggests a forward role for Francesco Totti, alongside Antonio Cassano. New boy Simone Perrotta will probably start in left midfield, leaving the centre for Olivier Dacourt and Daniele De Rossi. In defence, Voller must decide on a central pairing from Cristian Chivu, Traianos Dellas and new signings Philippe Mexes and Matteo Ferrari.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
If new forward Ahmed Hossam stays on the bench, then Roma will effectively play without a recognised centre-forward. Voller will also be short on midfield options if injuries kick in.

DON'T MENTION...
The change in coach just before the start of the season. All the preparation under Prandelli, who worked wonders with Parma last season, has now been wasted. Serse Cosmi and Luigi Del Neri were considered as alternatives, but Voller was thought to be more maleable, an important factor given that Roma don't know for certain when Prandelli will return.

LOOK OUT FOR
Gaetano D'Agostino, a highly promising Italian Under-21 midfielder.

PREDICTION
The sale of Emerson and Walter Samuel makes Roma easily the weakest Italian team in the competition. They may not even reach the last 16.

Middle man...Olivier Dacourt

Ajax

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As Dutch champions. They were on top for the entire season, and finished six points clear of PSV, despite some hiccups just before the winter break and at the end of the campaign.

STADIUM
Amsterdam Arena (capacity 51,342). Still regarded as one of Europe's five-star stadiums despite the pitch having to be relaid more than 20 times since inauguration in 1996.

COACH
Ronald Koeman. One of Holland's all-time great players, the 41-year-old has already shown his abilities on the other side of the touchline, leading Ajax to the League championship twice. Isn't scared of taking tough decisions – he sent Egyptian forward Mido on loan to Celta Vigo after a row, and has left starlets Rafael Van der Vaart and Wesley Sneijder on the bench on occasion. Tipped to become coach of former club Barcelona and the national side in future years.

POWERBROKER
Director Arie Van Eijden, in charge of Ajax's transfer policy. Also technical director Louis Van Gaal, responsible for ensuring the seemingly endless

Under pressure...Wesley Sonck

HOW THEY LINE UP

stream of talented youngsters reaching the first team doesn't run dry.

TACTICS
Koeman prefers 4-3-3 but needs a right winger. Currently, 17-year-old Tom De Mul is filling the gap, although Argentinian Mauro Rosales was recently bought from Newell's Old Boys. Wesley Sonck will take the central striking role of Zlatan Ibrahimovic, now at Juventus, while Maarten Stekelenburg has beaten off Bogdan Lobont for the goalkeeper's jersey. The three midfield places are contested by Sneijder, Van der Vaart, Tomas Galasek, Antony Obodai and Steven Pienaar. John Heitinga and Nigel De Jong take the central defensive berths.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Stekelenburg, De Jong, De Mul and Romanian winger Nicolae Mitea are relatively inexperienced at continental level, and Koeman fears his young defence makes too many mistakes to be successful in the Champions League. Sonck is also under pressure to find goals at European level.

DON'T MENTION...
Why Ajax let slip the chance to sign a suitable replacement for Ibrahimovic. And don't ask Koeman why Van der Vaart and Sneijder can't play together in midfield. He is fed up explaining!

LOOK OUT FOR
Maxwell. Why none of Europe's giants has been knocking on Ajax's door for the Brazilian left-back or midfielder is anyone's guess. Also Heitinga, who has the chance to prove he has the leadership qualities to run his defence at the top level.

PREDICTION
Lack of a class striker and an inexperienced defence may prove fatal against Juventus and Bayern Munich. A repeat of last year's first round elimination is likely. If not, the second round will prove too much.

Bayern Munich

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Directly, as Bundesliga runners-up.

STADIUM
Olympiastadion (capacity 60,000). Built for the 1972 Olympics and beginning to fray a little around the edges but it remains one of Europe's most spectacular arenas, thanks largely to its avant-garde tent-like roof structure.

COACH
Felix Magath. The Bayern board, concluding too many players were living in a comfort zone, sacked coach Ottmar Hitzfeld at the end of last season and replaced him with the ex-Stuttgart arch-disciplinarian. Welcome to merciless training sessions, where stars are put in their place. Magath likes to attack on the pitch, too.

POWERBROKER
Uli Hoeness. General manager for the past 25 years. To his enemies, an arrogant loud-mouth who loves to court controversy. But to Bayern fans, an expert transfer wheeler-dealer and astute businessman who turned the club into a booming commercial enterprise.

TACTICS
Magath is likely to have Bayern in a 4-4-2, believing a diamond represents the best way forward. New boy Torsten Frings lines up in the 'enforcer' role, Michael Ballack and Sebastian Deisler – the latter fully recovered after missing most of 2003-04 with depression – play as creative wing-halves, with Ze Roberto just behind the strikers: Dutch goal machine Roy Makaay and either

HOW THEY LINE UP

Roque Santa Cruz or Iranian newcomer Vahid Hashemian.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Test keeper Oliver Kahn at every go. Last season the veteran's concentration wandered and he made the sort of basic errors that well and truly put paid to his ice-man image. Doubts also persist about the solidity of left-back Hasan Salihamidzic and stoppers Thomas Linke and Robert Kovac.

DON'T MENTION...
Players talking out of turn to the media – Magath will have them square-bashing; the 'It was better in my day' rhetoric from board members Franz Beckenbauer, Karl-Heinz Rummenigge and Hoeness; the umpteenth article hitting at Ballack for not being a leader.

LOOK OUT FOR
Andreas Gorlitz, a German Under-21 right-back signed from relegated 1860 Munich in the close season.

PREDICTION
On the back of two poor Champions League campaigns the pressure is on to reach the last eight at least. Even with Magath knocking the egos into shape, it may be asking too much.

Striking partnership...Roque Santa Cruz and Roy Makaay

Juventus

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As runners-up to Milan in Serie A.

STADIUM
The Delle Alpi (capacity 69,041), built for the 1990 World Cup, has never been liked by Juve fans. Plans are afoot to reduce its capacity, making it more atmospheric and creating more space for hospitality.

COACH
Fabio Capello, one of the most successful coaches in the history of Italian football, having won the Serie A title with Milan and Roma, and the Spanish League with Real Madrid. Made the hugely controversial move north to Turin this summer, having previously promised Roma fans he would never join Juve.

POWERBROKER
Former player Roberto Bettega may be the public face of Juventus, particularly in dealings with the G-14, but general manager Luciano Moggi is the power behind the throne. He's responsible for all transfer business, having previously been in charge of Napoli in the Maradona era.

HOW THEY LINE UP

TACTICS
Capello will stick to a rigid 4-4-2, with early indications that David Trezeguet and new signing Zlatan Ibrahimovic will be the preferred strike partnership. A powerful midfield will be anchored by Emerson, alongside another new signing, Manuele Blasi, with Pavel Nedved a dynamic presence on the left. In defence, Capello has reunited the Parma centre-back duo of Fabio Cannavaro and Lilian Thuram.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Last season, the slow defence was often caught out. The signing of Cannavaro should improve things, but Juve look vulnerable on the flanks: Gianluca Zambrotta is not a natural defender, and Alessandro Birindelli can be skinned by clever wingers.

DON'T MENTION...
The role of Alex Del Piero, who remains hugely important to the club in commercial terms, but his poor form and injuries mean he is unlikely to be a first-choice under Capello.

LOOK OUT FOR
Ibrahimovic, who as Italy discovered to their cost at Euro 2004 is capable of brilliant improvisation.

PREDICTION
The deadline-day signings of Ibrahimovic and Cannavaro have transformed Juve into serious contenders. Capello will want to knock Milan off their domestic perch, but his side also look strong enough to reach the semi-finals in Europe.

Dynamic...Pavel Nedved

Maccabi Tel Aviv

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
The hard way, after finishing second to Maccabi Haifa in last season's Israeli League. In the second qualifying round, they overcame HJK Helsinki of Finland, 1-0 on aggregate. Then they beat Greece's PAOK Salonika in the third qualifying round. A 2-1 away win in the first leg was converted to a 3-0 victory by UEFA after PAOK were discovered to have fielded an ineligible player. Liran Cohen sealed Maccabi's victory by scoring the only goal of the return.

STADIUM
UEFA has given Israeli clubs the go-ahead to stage European ties on home soil, so Maccabi's Bloomfield stadium (capacity 15,400) will play host to Bayern, Ajax and Juventus.

COACH
Nir Klinger. Former Israeli international who guided Maccabi to the League title two years ago in his first season in charge.

TACTICS
Likely to be defensive against such strong opposition, with playmaker Reuven Oved and Ghanaian striker Ishmael Addo the probable key figures.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
The pace, strength and talent of their experienced group opponents will be enough to see off Maccabi.

DON'T MENTION...
UEFA's refusal to shift the date or kick-off time of the opening match, at home to Bayern. September 15 is the Jewish New Year.

LOOK OUT FOR
Addo, who was top scorer at the 1999 Under-17 World Championship and is now starting to carve out a career in Europe.

PREDICTION
The rank outsiders in this season's toughest group. Will finish bottom, it's just a matter of how many points – and extra cash – they can pick up.

Victory is ours...Liran Cohen scored against PAOK to seal Maccabi's win

Fenerbahce

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As Turkish champions. Fener were nine points behind leaders Besiktas at the winter break, but lost only one of their next 17 games.

STADIUM
Sukru Saracoglu (capacity 52,000). Turkey's premier ground after recently being modernised and extended. The stadium, situated on the Asian side of the Bosphorus, formerly just carried the name of the club but was renamed in 1999 in honour of a president of the 1930s and 40s.

COACH
Christoph Daum. Charismatic, controversial German who has been busy rehabilitating himself in the past four years after testing positive for cocaine, an affair that cost him the chance of taking charge of Germany. The 50-year-old, previously in charge at Koln, Leverkusen, Besiktas and Austria Wien, runs a tight ship and is close to his players.

POWERBROKER
Aziz Yildirim. Took over from the colourful Ali Sen as club president in 1998. His insistence on combining homegrown talents with big-name imports has proved well-judged.

TACTICS
The 4-5-1 system in which Dutchman Pierre Van Hooijdonk plays up front on his own reeks of safety-first. But it can be transformed into a 4-3-3 in an instant if wide deep-lying Serhat Akin and Tuncay Sanli push on. The other midfield starters are new Brazilian playmaker Alex, compatriot Marco Aurelio, who sits in front of the back four, and the busy Serkan Balci, another new signing, from Genclerbirligi, wide on the left. On loan from Barcelona, the experienced keeper Rustu Recber will take over from young Volkan Demirel. Deniz Baris or veteran Umit Ozat will team up with Brazilian Luciano in central defence.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
While Fener's centre-backs are good in the air and combative, they are a little sluggish. Brazilian left-back Fabiano is good going forward but his positioning leaves much to be desired. Opponents should not give any time or space to Marco Aurelio or Alex, who really make Fener tick.

DON'T MENTION...
Daum's pre-season claims that certain board members were plotting his downfall and asking journalists to pen uncomplimentary articles about him. Or that Van Hooijdonk has been moaning about lack of support up front.

LOOK OUT FOR
The magical left foot of ex-Cruzeiro star Alex. At just £3 million, he represents great value for money. Also, Onder Turaci, a resourceful young right-back from Standard Liege.

PREDICTION
Fener's huge fan base is likely to be disappointed. The class is too thinly spread to take them beyond the opening phase.

Attacking option...Tuncay

Lyon

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As French champions. At one stage, Lyon were 10 points behind Monaco but staged a magnificent springtime comeback to take their third straight title, emulating the feats of Saint-Etienne in the 1970s and Marseille in the 1990s.

STADIUM
Gerland (capacity 42,000). Part of the ground is a listed building and it is unlikely to be rocked to its foundations by the home fans. The Gerland has a rather staid atmosphere and is certainly not the seething cauldron to be found at Lens, Marseille or Saint-Etienne.

COACH
Paul Le Guen. Intelligent, eloquent and softly-spoken, the Breton often looks more university tutor than football boss. But the urbane exterior hides a steely resolve to succeed, and since taking over two years ago, he has never shied away from the tough decisions that come with the stewardship of an extensive squad.

POWERBROKER
Jean-Michel Aulas. In 17 years as president, he has transformed an underachieving, debt-ridden club into a commercial and sporting success story. Never far from a microphone, he now rivals Auxerre boss Guy Roux as French football's rent-a-quote.

TACTICS
Le Guen usually goes with a 4-4-2, though on occasion he uses a 4-5-1, with a second striker playing deeper. Whatever the formation, the emphasis is on ball retention and quick changes of tempo. Despite the ankle injury that will sideline Brazilian striker Giovane Elber until at least New Year, Le Guen has a surfeit of options in attack. New signings Sylvain Wiltord (Arsenal) and Pierre-Alain Frau (Sochaux) are favourites to start but Sidney Govou, who can also play in right midfield, and newly-signed Brazilian Nilmar could come into the equation. Michael Essien and Juninho Pernambucano drive the midfield.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Attack on the flanks – the positioning of full-backs Anthony Reveillere and Jeremy Berthod can be found wanting. Lyon can be tentative away from home.

DON'T MENTION...
The numerous first-teamers who left in the close season (Peguy Luyindula, Edmilson, Vikash Dhorasoo, Eric Carriere, Eric Deflandre, Patrick Muller). Or Aulas' repeated claims that France's tax regime makes it impossible for Lyon to compete in Europe.

LOOK OUT FOR
Prodigiously-gifted teenage attacker Hatem Ben Arfa, monitored by Manchester United, Chelsea, Juventus and Ajax. Also, Nilmar, bought from Internacional for £4.5million.

PREDICTION
Widely criticised for an apparent willingness to sell everything that moves, Lyon have bought well too, and if they can find a touch more consistency, a quarter-final place is not out of the question.

Mr Motivator...Michael Essien

Manchester United

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By comfortably beating Dinamo Bucharest in the third qualifying round, despite a host of injuries and Olympic absentees. But a third-place finish in last season's Premier League raised concerns that United are slipping behind Arsenal and Chelsea as serious contenders.

HOW THEY LINE UP

STADIUM
Old Trafford (capacity 68,190) is more passionate on European nights than for domestic games, when the most audible sound is that of corporate guests munching prawn sandwiches. Any over-enthusiasm from fans is soon stamped out (sometimes literally) by the thuggish bouncer-stewards.

MANAGER
Alex Ferguson. The 62-year-old Scot is the last of the great all-powerful managers, controlling every aspect of the club. He rarely signs players over the age of 25, preferring to exert his influence over youngsters.

POWERBROKER
Peter Gill, the chief executive who was promoted from his deputy role after Peter Kenyon's shock move to Chelsea. The club's former finance director faces the challenge of keeping the corporate investors happy while also trying to run a club where profit is not the priority.

Attacking force...Alan Smith

TACTICS
With the signing of Wayne Rooney and Alan Smith, Ferguson has exciting options in attack, with Ruud Van Nistelrooy and Louis Saha already in the fold. In midfield, the long-term fitness of captain Roy Keane is a concern, but he provides an option in central defence. Ryan Giggs and Cristiano Ronaldo are the wide men, while Paul Scholes can play in several positions. Kleberson, Liam Miller, Phil Neville and Darren Fletcher are other midfield options. Tim Howard is first-choice keeper behind a back four strengthened by Rio Ferdinand's return.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
United could be undone in Europe by the fast and furious style that has served them so well in the Premier League over the past decade. The left side of defence is a concern, with Argentinian signing Gabriel Heinze needing rest after his Copa America and Olympics feats over the summer.

DON'T MENTION...
Rock of Gibraltar, the racehorse whose breeding rights caused an almighty row between Ferguson and United plc's biggest shareholders, J P McManus and John Magnier. The Irish pair will be key players in any possible takeover bid by American billionaire Malcolm Glazer.

LOOK OUT FOR
Miller, the Irish midfielder signed for nothing from Celtic this summer.

PREDICTION
The addition of Rooney has given United a powerful new weapon in their bid for a third European Cup. They are favourites to top the group, and then anything is possible. Taking part is not enough; reaching the last four is the minimum requirement.

Sparta Prague

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By beating Ferencvaros of Hungary 2-1 on aggregate in the third qualifying round after finishing runners-up to Banik Ostrava in the Czech League. Sparta's relatively poor domestic form last season cost coach Jiri Kotrba his job, despite the team reaching the last 16 of the Champions League.

HOW THEY LINE UP

STADIUM
Toyota Arena (capacity 20,558), more commonly known as Letna. A modern, compact ground, entirely rebuilt in the 1990s, which also hosts the more important Czech national team games.

COACH
Frantisek Straka. A popular Sparta player in the 1980s who returned to the club late last season. Young, media-friendly and probably the sharpest dresser in Czech football, but with limited coaching experience. Watch for him urging the crowd to make more noise at home games.

POWERBROKER
Vlastimil Kostal. Through his Sparta presidency and his vaguely defined role as national team 'manager', he is probably the most powerful man in Czech football. Under the old regime, Kostal was a member of the Communist Party, something opposition fans like to remind him about.

Instant impact...Milan Pacanda

TACTICS
Straka remains faithful to 4-4-2 but with several recent arrivals and departures is only just settling on his first-choice line-up. Midfielder Karel Poborsky remains a key, as does goalkeeper Jaromir Blazek, the Czech national team No 2. Up front, Milan Pacanda has impressed since joining over the summer. But none of Straka's preferred back four has been with the club more than a couple of years, and the lack of cohesion sometimes shows. Sparta's main strength lies in midfield, with Slovak international Rastislav Michalik, Lukas Zelenka and rising star Petr Vorisek all quality performers.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Poborsky's importance to the team, on both footballing and psychological levels, cannot be overstated. Without their captain exerting an influence on the game, Sparta are far less effective. Opponents could also take advantage of the back four's current frailty.

DON'T MENTION...
Ongoing police investigations into the activities of 10 clubs, including Sparta, suspected of bribing referees in the domestic League, in the wake of the Synot match-fixing scandal.

LOOK OUT FOR
Jan Simak. Talented attacking midfielder who was a misfit in the Bundesliga with Bayer Leverkusen but should figure prominently for Sparta when he regains match fitness.

PREDICTION
Sparta somehow usually achieve Champions League respectability, despite selling most of their best players every six months. This season, though, the lack of quality and experience may begin to show, and progress to the last 16 seems unlikely.

Arsenal

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As English champions after a runaway season. They finished 11 points clear of closest challengers Chelsea and were unbeaten.

STADIUM
Highbury (capacity 38,500), otherwise known as Highbury the Library, though the fans tend to be more vocal on European nights. Now too small for Arsenal's ambitions, but one of the best examples of the classic English football ground.

MANAGER
Arsene Wenger, aka the Professor. Don't let the stressed accountant look fool you; he is one of the brightest and most innovative thinkers in the modern game.

POWERBROKER
David Dein. Technically only the club's vice-chairman, but a key shareholder and a mover and shaker within the FA, UEFA and G-14.

TACTICS
A bald 4-4-2 description of Arsenal's line-up does not do justice to their reputation as the fastest team in Europe. Jose Antonio Reyes has given Wenger a new option in attack, which is important given Dennis Bergkamp's continued refusal to fly to away games in Europe. Reyes has also been used in wide midfield.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
The dependence on Thierry Henry means any injury to him severely weakens the attacking threat. Jens Lehmann's goalkeeping judgement remains a weakness.

DON'T MENTION...
The huge loans taken out to finance the new stadium at Ashburton Grove. Oh, and don't ask if Wenger has signed a contract extension yet.

LOOK OUT FOR
Cesc Fabregas, a Spanish teenager with audacious ability, and Mathieu Flamini, a young French midfielder snatched from Marseille this summer.

PREDICTION
If Henry can repeat last season's blistering form, anything is possible.

Versatile...Jose Antonio Reyes

Panathinaikos

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By finally breaking their League title hoodoo last season, taking their first championship in eight years.

STADIUM
Apostolos Nikolaidis (capacity 16,620). After 16 years at the Olympic stadium, Pana opted to return to their spiritual home ground (also known as Leoforos) in 2000.

COACH
Itzhak Schum. Pana fans are ambivalent about their Israeli boss. Some love him for ending their long wait for a League title; others moan about his ultra-conservative tactics.

POWERBROKER
The Vardinoyannis family, wealthy industrialists. Giorgios Vardinoyannis was club president from 1979 to 2000, since when his nephews Pavlos and Yannis have held sway.

TACTICS
Schum has never been a gung-ho coach. His priority is a solid shape, and he is likely to use a 4-4-2 at home in the Champions League and 4-5-1 away. The key to Pana's hopes lies with their effectiveness in midfield: Angelos Basinas and Srdan Andric take the holding roles, with Rudolf Skacel on the left and Ezequiel Gonzalez or Lucian Sanmartean as playmaker.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Pana's creative players do not like an aggressive, pressing game from opponents. The central defenders are vulnerable to nippy forwards.

DON'T MENTION...
The red tape hampering Pana's hopes of building a new stadium.

LOOK OUT FOR
Young right-back Loukas Vintra and exciting midfielder Sanmartean.

PREDICTION
No chance of this Greek side causing a surprise. Very much a long shot.

Left-sided...Rudolf Skacel

PSV

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
After finishing runners-up in the Dutch League they beat Red Star Belgrade 7-3 on aggregate in the third qualifying round.

STADIUM
Philips (capacity 35,270). Built in 1913, it has been renovated and expanded on several occasions.

COACH
Guus Hiddink. The 57-year-old knows the continental club game inside out, having previously coached Real Madrid, Valencia and Fenerbahce, and he led PSV to win the European Cup in 1988 during a previous spell in charge. But his greatest moment of glory was leading South Korea to the 2002 World Cup semi-finals.

POWERBROKER
Hiddink, who isn't just coach but also director. With long-time chairman Harry Van Raaij now departed, Hiddink is accountable to no one – not bad when you're operating in the transfer market.

TACTICS
Hiddink prefers a 4-2-3-1 system, with either Jan Vennegoor of Hesselink or Gerald Sibon as target man. John De Jong or Johann Vonlanthen will play in behind him, with Park Ji-sung and DaMarcus Beasley on the flanks, while Mark Van Bommel and Philip Cocu control midfield.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
The departure of Arjen Robben, Mateja Kezman and Dennis Rommedahl means the team will have problems scoring in the key games. Also, PSV's opponents have history on their side. The Eindhoven club have qualified for the Champions League seven times before but never reached the second round.

DON'T MENTION...
The fact that Van Bommel will surely leave the club sooner or later. Or Fons Spooren – the perfect candidate to succeed departing chairman Van Raaij until being accused and convicted of having sex with underage male prostitutes although being aware he was HIV-positive.

LOOK OUT FOR
Beasley's runs on the left wing. He is not as stylish as his predecessor, Robben, but is just as dangerous. Also, classy young Swiss Vonlanthen.

PREDICTION
PSV have a good chance of finishing runners-up to Arsenal, the clear group favourites.

Striker support...John De Jong

Rosenborg

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As Norwegian champions (for the 12th consecutive season) and then defeating Serif Tiraspol and Maccabi Haifa in the qualifying rounds.

STADIUM
Lerkendal (capacity 22,000). In recent years the formerly dreary ground has been transformed into a wonderful footballing arena for the players – nicknamed the 'troll kids'.

COACH
Ola By Rise, a former journalist who still reviews children's literature in the local paper. After spells as assistant to Nils Arne Eggen and Age Hareide, By Rise took the head coach reins prior to this season, and the team's good form has silenced the doubters of the coach's abilities.

POWERBROKER
Rune Bratseth. The former Norway international is at the head of the club's administrative structure, and having been prudent with money, he finally decided it was time to spend some of it this summer, making four new signings. But there are still millions in the bank.

Quick bite...Jan Gunnar Solli

HOW THEY LINE UP

TACTICS
Rosenborg have stuck to a 4-3-3 formation for many years, despite the regular comings and goings in the squad. Keeper Espen Johnsen struggles for consistency at top level but is a super shot stopper. Central defenders Erik Hoftun and Vidar Riseth are rock solid, and Swedish full-back Mikael Dorsin has shown good form since joining and is giving Christer Basma and Stale Stensaas competition for places. In midfield, Orjan Berg is still ticking smoothly at 36, as is Roar Strand (34), while the younger Jan Gunnar Solli and Fredrik Winsnes have quick feet and plenty of bite. New buys Daniel Braaten and Thorstein Helstad offer pace and power down the wings. Frode Johnsen is the leading marksman, and though Harald Brattbakk, last season's League top scorer, has found the goals harder to come by this term he has scored some vital ones.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
The key is to neutralise Berg, the director of most attacking moves. The central defenders can be troubled by quick forwards, although Riseth covers well for Hoftun's lack of pace. Keeper Johnsen is uncomfortable when he has to use his feet.

DON'T MENTION...
The club's sound financial position, at least not to the club's Norwegian rivals. They are envious of the massive amount of money Rosenborg have made from playing in the Champions League for so many seasons.

LOOK OUT FOR
Braaten. Proved his quality with a superb solo goal against Maccabi Haifa in the third qualifying round.

PREDICTION
Merely qualifying for the group stage is mission accomplished after missing out last season. Reaching the next stage would be a major bonus.

Barcelona

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Directly, having finished runners-up in La Liga after a magnificent second half of the season, led by the bite of Pitbull Edgar Davids and the goofy genius of Ronaldinho.

STADIUM
Camp Nou (capacity 99,000). Barcelona are a national team in the club game who should be performing in a cavernous cauldron of patriotic pride. Only it doesn't quite work that way. Camp Nou is truly magnificent but can be disappointingly quiet.

COACH
Softly-spoken, chain-smoking Frank Rijkaard. Described as a "phenomenon" by club president Joan Laporta, the Dutchman never, ever loses his cool – and seems to have successfully transmitted that relaxed, quiet confidence to his players. Has little control over who Barca buy, mind you.

Goofy genius...Ronaldinho

HOW THEY LINE UP

POWERBROKER
The world's most opinionated man: Johan Cruyff. Vice-president Sandro Rossell is the mover and shaker, the ex-Nike man who did most to bring Ronaldinho to Camp Nou, but behind the scenes Cruyff looms large, very large, with his unofficial, always-denied influence over president Laporta.

TACTICS
Loosely 4-1-1-3-1. Rijkaard has opted for a single striker, the brilliant, effervescent Samuel Eto'o, supplied and supplemented by a line of creative free spirits – Deco, Ludovic Giuly and Ronaldinho. Two Brazilians at full-back, Silvinho and Belletti, guarantee more support on the wings, while Xavi adds vision from a little deeper.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Take advantage of the space left on either side of midfield, and if the full-backs push on, the space behind them. Outmuscle them in the middle and attack them in the air, too: Barca still look rather vulnerable in that area, especially as keeper Victor Valdes does not dominate his area. Oh, and knobble Ronaldinho.

DON'T MENTION...
The fact that Barca still haven't replaced Davids. Or that maybe, just maybe, they've gone creative midfielder mad.

LOOK OUT FOR
Ronaldinho, of course, with his skills and flicks and childlike enthusiasm for the game. The most fun you can have in a football stadium (watching Eto'o is a very close second).

PREDICTION
Could come unstuck against better-organised, powerful sides, especially if they suffer key injuries, but undoubtedly have the ability to go a long way. Squad looks a little short, though. Semi-finalists.

Celtic

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As Scottish champions. They finished no fewer than 17 points clear of runners-up Rangers and having lost only two of their 38 games.

STADIUM
Celtic Park (capacity 60,506). Known colloquially as Parkhead, after the area of Glasgow in which it is situated, and sometimes referred to wistfully as Paradise, due to its proximity to a large cemetery. Celtic Park has undergone extensive redevelopment in recent years and is without doubt one of the most atmospheric grounds in Europe.

MANAGER
Martin O'Neill, a studious, pragmatic individual with an excellent big-game pedigree. One of the most respected managers in British football, as evidenced by his automatic inclusion on shortlists whenever a high-profile vacancy comes around.

POWERBROKER
The reclusive Dermot Desmond, a billionaire Irish businessman who has a stake in Manchester United as well as being the majority shareholder at Celtic.

Delicate skills...Stilian Petrov

HOW THEY LINE UP

TACTICS
O'Neill favours 4-4-2, utilising the strength of centre-backs Bobo Balde and Stanislav Varga, allied to the pace of full-backs Jackie McNamara and Didier Agathe. However, the team can play 3-5-2, with the introduction of defender Joos Valgaeren and the versatile Chris Sutton. Neil Lennon's ball-winning capabilities complement the delicate skills of Stilian Petrov and the powerful running of Alan Thompson in midfield, while new signing Juninho offers a new avenue of creativity.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Defence has been their Achilles heel in Europe. Balde and Varga are dominant in the air but vulnerable against pacy attackers. Agathe is effective when going forward but has defensive weaknesses.

DON'T MENTION...
'Where's the money gone?' With home crowds of 50,000-plus, huge season ticket sales, a massive injection of cash from the team's European exploits in recent years and one of the most popular brand names in world football, Celtic should be awash with money. Yet very little seems to be finding its way into O'Neill's signing budget.

LOOK OUT FOR
Aiden McGeady, a local youngster who broke into the first team last year. Despite having been born in Glasgow, he has elected to represent the Republic of Ireland at international level on the strength of the fact his grandfather is Irish.

PREDICTION
Celtic will take heart from their impressive victory over group rivals Barcelona in last year's UEFA Cup. However, the departure of top scorer Henrik Larsson to the Catalan side and the usual defensive frailties suggest a pre-Christmas exit.

Milan

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As runaway champions of Italy.

STADIUM
Giuseppe Meazza aka San Siro (capacity 85,700). Seats can go unsold on European nights, and the pitch surface problems have never been fully solved, but it remains one of the great intimidating arenas of European soccer.

COACH
Carlo Ancelotti. Recently signed a contract extension that ties him to the club until 2007. A European Cup winner as a player and as a coach with Milan.

POWERBROKER
Adriano Galliani. Officially the club's vice-president, but an all-powerful figure while owner Silvio Berlusconi is off running the country. Galliani is also president of the Italian League, a source of concern for his critics.

TACTICS
The key figures are Andrea Pirlo, the midfield pivot, and brilliant Brazilian playmaker Kaka. In defence, new signing Jaap Stam could partner Alessandro Nesta in the centre, with Paolo Maldini reverting to left-back.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Stop Pirlo and Kaka and you break up Milan's rhythm. Deportivo La Coruna beat them last season by upping the tempo, preventing Milan from playing their settled possession game.

DON'T MENTION...
Nothing embarrasses Milan at the moment. Everything is rosy, and even Berlusconi has stopped interfering.

LOOK OUT FOR
Vikash Dhorasoo, a free signing from Lyon, is an unknown quantity in Italian football. Rui Costa, frozen out by the form of Kaka last term, could be set for a comeback.

PREDICTION
Must be serious contenders, especially with the addition of Stam and forward Hernan Crespo.

Making the play...Kaka

Shakhtar Donetsk

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Finished runners-up in the Ukrainian League, then beat Armenia's Pyunik Yerevan and Club Brugge of Belgium in the qualifying stages.

STADIUM
Olympiyskyi (capacity 25,093). Rented by Shakhtar because their new home stadium is under construction.

COACH
Romanian Mircea Lucescu, experienced, pragmatic and a superb tactician.

POWERBROKER
Club president Rinat Akhmetov is eastern Europe's equivalent of Roman Abramovich. The billionaire has invested heavily in players.

TACTICS
Shakhtar play 4-4-2, although it is not rigidly observed. The team's success depends to a great extent on the performance of holding midfielder Anatoliy Tymoshchuk and Serbian playmaker Zvonimir Vukic. Tymoshchuk is skipper and irreplaceable in his role, while Vukic – together with Brazilian Francisco Matuzalem – dictates the pace of the game. Lucescu often puts more emphasis on attack by putting on a third forward.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Vukic is inventive but lacks pace, and that may be a key factor in the Champions League. Indeed, the squad as a whole may be caught out by the slickness of the European game compared to the relatively sedate domestic equivalent.

HOW THEY LINE UP

DON'T MENTION...
The pressure placed on the club's finances by the fact that the huge investment in players can be paid off only by a good showing in the Champions League.

LOOK OUT FOR
Pacy teenager Marica, signed from Dinamo Bucharest after scoring against Shakhtar in last season's UEFA Cup. Matuzalem, signed for £14million from Serie A side Brescia over the summer and who has oozed quality in his performances so far.

PREDICTION
Lucescu broke the bank to get Matuzalem, and now looks to have built a competitive team. He's determined to take some scalps in the group matches – the serious summer buys mean he has every chance.

Pace setter...Zvonimir Vukic

Anderlecht

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Ran away with the Belgian League last season, then beat Benfica 3-1 on aggregate in the third qualifying round.

STADIUM
Parc Astrid (capacity 30,000). Stylishly revamped in the 1980s, it is arguably the most luxurious medium-sized stadium in Europe. It was the first ground in continental Europe to feature executive boxes, but also boasts plenty of atmosphere and intimacy.

COACH
Hugo Broos. The next time the Belgian federation needs a coach, the former international central defender is bound to be the prime candidate. Anderlecht are expected to be Belgian champions year in, year out but the quiet 52-year-old rarely shows any sign of the pressure.

Prodigy...Vincent Kompany

HOW THEY LINE UP

POWERBROKER
Roger Vanden Stock. Took over from his father Constant as president in 1996. In all, the Vanden Stocks have been connected with Anderlecht for over three-quarters of a century.

TACTICS
Broos usually prefers a compact, disciplined 4-4-2 set-up. With Finnish stopper Hannu Tihinen out with a broken foot, Burkina Faso centre-back Lamine Traore should partner teenage prodigy Vincent Kompany in central defence. Walter Baseggio conducts the midfield traffic, aided by Serb Under-21 cap Goran Lovre, while all-action Swede Christian Wilhelmsson is let off the leash on the right flank. Aruna Dindane is the star of the attack. For difficult away trips, Broos will pack his midfield in a 4-5-1.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Czech keeper Daniel Zitka is erratic, and the loss of the commanding presence of stopper Tihinen is a blow. Opponents would also do well to cut the supply line of midfield general Baseggio.

DON'T MENTION...
Dindane sulking after the club blocked a summer move to Spain or England. Or the fact that Anderlecht fixed a UEFA Cup semi-final win over Brian Clough's Nottingham Forest back in 1984.

LOOK OUT FOR
Teenage defender Anthony Vanden Borre, who is already showing great maturity and versatility. Also, Fabrice Ehret, a gifted left-sided midfielder signed from Strasbourg.

PREDICTION
Competitive at home but often lacking in conviction away. This is not a combination that will put them into the second round.

Internazionale

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
By beating Swiss champions Basle 5-2 on aggregate in the third qualifying round, having finished fourth in Serie A last season.

STADIUM
Giuseppe Meazza aka San Siro (capacity 85,700). *See Milan, p49.*

COACH
Roberto Mancini. One of the brightest coaching talents in European football, his teams are playing with the same sort of panache and authority that he displayed in his playing career with Sampdoria, Lazio and, er, Leicester.

POWERBROKERS
Two former players, Giacinto Facchetti and Gabriele Oriali. Facchetti is the club president and public face of the club after Massimo Moratti's resignation last season. Oriali is the general manager and responsible for transfer dealings.

TACTICS
Mancini has more options than probably any other coach in the competition. In midfield, Edgar Davids and Juan Veron are the preferred central pairing, but to that can be added anyone from Ze Maria, Dejan Stankovic, Emre Belozoglu, Kily Gonzalez, Andy Van der Meyde, Esteban Cambiasso, Giorgios

HOW THEY LINE UP

Karagounis and Cristiano Zanetti. In attack, Adriano and Christian Vieri are likely to be alternated as the main centre-foreward, with Alvaro Recoba, Julio Cruz and Obafemi Martins contesting the other berth. In central defence, Mancini must decide between Ivan Cordoba, Marco Materazzi, Sinisa Mihajlovic and new signing Nicolas Burdisso.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
The loss of Fabio Cannavaro to Juventus leaves central defence looking suspect.

DON'T MENTION...
The fact that Inter haven't won the Italian League title since 1989.

LOOK OUT FOR
Adriano. The star of this summer's Copa America.

PREDICTION
The Italian League remains the priority, but a run in Europe cannot be discounted. Will not be pushovers.

Berth booked...Juan Veron

Valencia

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Brilliantly, as champions. The most complete team in Spain by a mile – strong, fast and disciplined.

STADIUM
The wonderfully sheer, open-topped, concrete Mestalla (capacity 55,000), which is inhabited by the most ridiculously demanding, quick-to-criticise fans in the world. That said, when things are going well the atmosphere is second to none.

COACH
Claudio Ranieri. The only man that could have even vaguely placated Valencia's fans after the departure of Double-winner Rafa Benitez since it was the Italian who kick-started Valencia's rise between 1997 and 1999. The fans are not enamoured, however, with Ranieri's obsession with buying compatriot players.

POWERBROKER
Not president Jaime Orti, that's for sure. He is likeable and a proper fan but owns just 300 of the 120,000 shares and gets pulled this way and that by the warring factions within the club. Valencia now have a new major shareholder in the shape of Bautista Soler and family, which should ease tensions – for now. Director general Manuel Llorente remains a brooding presence.

HOW THEY LINE UP

TACTICS
Fundamentally a fast, compact, counter-attacking 4-4-2, but with David Albelda lying deep in midfield and a split strikeforce. Valencia are likely to remain athletic, strong and very hard to beat, as under Benitez.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Play them before defender Roberto Ayala gets fit again. And don't expect to go through the middle, where they are frighteningly competitive.

DON'T MENTION...
Rafa Benitez.

LOOK OUT FOR
Winger Vicente. Quick, direct and full of goals.

PREDICTION
Valencia will get through the group and once they reach the knockout rounds they'll be very, very hard to knock out. Could even go all the way, but the last eight seems more realistic.

Deep-lying...David Albelda

Werder Bremen

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As worthy German champions. They allied defensive meanness to attacking flair and consistency.

STADIUM
Weserstadion (capacity 35,800). Supporters at the riverside ground are not normally slow to get behind their team but particularly crank up the volume on European nights.

COACH
Thomas Schaaf. The critics who used to argue he was too quiet to lead a pro club are now eating their words. The players claim it is the 43-year-old's laid-back leadership style that keeps them relaxed and concentrated. Spent his entire playing career at Werder, as a full-back.

POWERBROKER
Klaus Allofs. When the ex-international was handed the job of Werder general manager back in October 1999, many in the media thought it was only a temporary appointment. How wrong they were. Has proved himself a fine spotter of affordable talent.

TACTICS
Schaaf will, not surprisingly, stick with the successful midfield diamond – ex-centre-back Frank Baumann in the holding role, Tim Borowski (right) and Fabian Ernst (left), and Johan Micoud at the point. These days,

HOW THEY LINE UP

Schaaf prefers a flat back four, with centre-back Valerien Ismael the key defender. Up front, Croat Ivan Klasnic and new signing Miroslav Klose appear to have the starting nod.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
First of all, man-mark Micoud. He is the originator of all Werder's most threatening attacks. Keeper Andreas Reinke is not great handling high balls.

DON'T MENTION...
Striker Angelos Haristeas' increasing unhappiness at being chained to the bench; the departure of prolific striker Ailton to Schalke in the summer; Klose's crisis of confidence.

LOOK OUT FOR
Klasnic. Strong in the air, packs a powerful left-footed shot and sets up chances too.

PREDICTION
The team are bound to miss the glut of goals provided by Ailton and will do well to get out of the group.

Crisis of confidence...Miroslav Klose

Chelsea

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Directly, after finishing second in the Premier League.

STADIUM
Stamford Bridge (capacity 42,449). Now extensively rebuilt as Chelsea Village, a hotel and restaurant complex with football stadium attached.

COACH
Jose Mourinho. Hailed as the brightest young coach in European football after his Porto side won the UEFA Cup and Champions League in successive seasons. Supremely confident, leading to accusations of arrogance, he is the highest paid club coach in the world, on £4million a year.

POWERBROKER
Peter Kenyon, the chief executive headhunted from Manchester United with a brief from owner Roman Abramovich to transform Chelsea into a global 'brand'.

TACTICS
At Porto, Mourinho played with two defensive midfielders in a 4-2-3-1 formation, built around Deco in the central attacking midfield role. Early signs are he is following a slightly different path at Chelsea, with Frank Lampard and Claude Makelele regulars in central midfield, with a choice from Tiago, Joe Cole, Damien Duff, Alexei Smertin and Geremi to fill in the gaps out wide.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
New right-back Paulo Ferreira is going to take time to settle in, and more cynical defenders will try to exploit the powderkeg temper of new forward Mateja Kezman.

DON'T MENTION...
The money that Abramovich has pumped into Group H rivals CSKA Moscow via a sponsorship deal between CSKA and Sibneft, the Siberian oil company in which Abramovich is the major shareholder.

LOOK OUT FOR
Cole, desperate to revive his England career by playing regularly for Chelsea.

PREDICTION
Given the resources at Mourinho's disposal, don't discount a repeat of last season, when Chelsea reached the semi-finals.

Holding the middle...Frank Lampard

CSKA Moscow

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As Russian champions – their first title for 12 years – after a season during which they led the League from the very start but were constantly criticised for their lacklustre performances.

STADIUM
Lokomotiv (capacity 28,800). Moscow's most modern arena, built in 2002, is situated outside the city centre and has a perfect pitch combining natural and artificial grass. CSKA's own stadium seats only 10,000 and is unsuitable even for the Russian League.

COACH
Valeri Gazzayev, just turned 50, is back at CSKA after a six-month break, during which the club experimented with Portuguese coach Artur Jorge. Gazzayev lost his position as national team coach (which he used to combine with that of CSKA manager) in the middle of Russia's Euro 2004 qualification campaign in spring 2003.

POWERBROKER
Originally the army club in Soviet times, CSKA are now owned by a group of companies, one of which is alleged to be oil company Sibneft (Siberian Oil). The major shareholder in Sibneft is Chelsea owner Roman Abramovich, who is close friends with CSKA president Evgeni Giner, one of the most influential people in Russian football – he is also president of Russia's Premier-Liga.

HOW THEY LINE UP

TACTICS
The basic formation is 4-4-2 with two fast, skilful new signings up front – Croatian international Ivica Olic and Brazilian Vagner Love.

HOW TO BEAT THEM
In defence, too much depends on Sergei Ignashevich, especially since he is not able to train fully because of injuries.

DON'T MENTION...
Gazzayev's involuntary six-month 'vacation' when he was unwisely replaced by Jorge. It's also best not to ask about a planned modern arena, whose construction is long overdue, or Giner's close friendship with Abramovich.

LOOK OUT FOR
Teenage keeper Igor Akinfeev, who has good feet and superb reactions, and 21-year-old midfielder Yuri Zhirkov, who has great vision and passing ability.

PREDICTION
While most local fans fear CSKA will not progress, Chelsea look the only team that the Russian side cannot beat.

Fast and skilful...Vagner Love

Paris Saint-Germain

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
Automatically, by finishing runners-up in the French League after impressive spring form.

STADIUM
Parc des Princes (capacity 45,000). The fans at the Auteuil and Boulogne ends of the ground are as committed as any in the country. However, they can quickly turn against the team if things are not going to plan.

COACH
Vahid Halilhodzic. The 51-year-old Bosnian is notorious for his perfectionism, volcanic temperament and generally ruling with a rod of iron.

POWERBROKER
Francis Graille. Ex-Lille president who took over at PSG towards the end of the 2002-03 season. A formidable negotiator – ask ex-Man Utd chief executive Peter Kenyon, who came out second best when trying and failing to prise away Ronaldinho last year.

TACTICS
PSG's style of play may not always be pretty but the high workrate, sound organisation and pressing high up the pitch achieve results. Halilhodzic's favourite formation is a 4-3-2-1, with a libero in front of the back four (often Lorik Cana), two driving midfielders (Modeste Mbami and Edouard Cisse), new signing Jerome Rothen wide on the left and Reinaldo on the shoulder of lone striker Pauleta or Danijel Ljuboja.

HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
The defence has not looked at all secure so far this season, and keepers Jerome Alonzo and Lionel Letizi are both prone to panicky errors.

DON'T MENTION...
Defender Frederic Dehu and attacker Fabrice Fiorese leaving for Marseille. Or reports that PSG's owners, the Canal Plus TV group, is keen to sell.

LOOK OUT FOR
Reinaldo, a skilful Brazilian attacker who can score or create. Also, young Serb Ljuboja, who has a nose for goal.

PREDICTION
Halilhodzic has a reputation for creating winning sides from 'journeymen'. But PSG do not have enough quality or quantity to make a substantial impact.

Lone role?...Pauleta

FC Porto

HOW THEY QUALIFIED
As Portuguese League champions, though they would have qualified for the group stage anyway as defending European champions.

STADIUM
Dragao (capacity 52,000), a fantastic new arena constructed for Euro 2004.

COACH
Victor Fernandez. The Spaniard was handed the reins following the sacking of Italian Luigi Del Neri after just two months. Del Neri had replaced Jose Mourinho. Fernandez (ex-Zaragoza, Betis and Celta Vigo) is renowned for getting his teams to play attacking football.

POWERBROKER
Jorge Nuno Pinto da Costa, the long-standing president who has overseen Porto's eclipse of Benfica as Portugal's leading club.

TACTICS
Fernandez will favour a 4-3-3, and despite the sale of Deco has plenty of attacking talent to hand. There are new Brazilian signings Diego and Luis Fabiano, Helder Postiga and Ricardo Quaresma, both now back home after disappointing spells abroad, plus Benni McCarthy and Brazilian teenager Carlos Alberto.

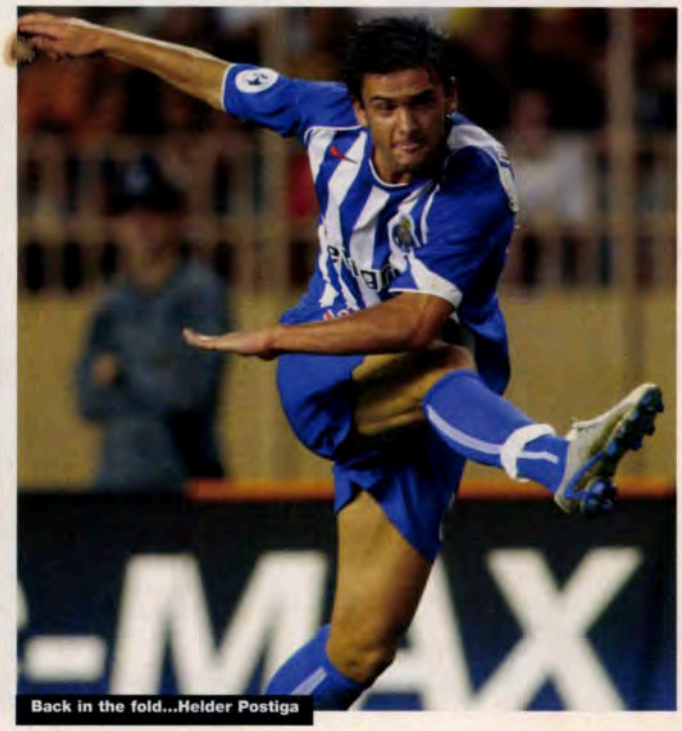
HOW THEY LINE UP

HOW TO BEAT THEM
Young defender Pepe has replaced Ricardo Carvalho, and though he's quick, his positioning is questionable.

DON'T MENTION...
The £45million received from the sale of Deco, Ricardo Carvalho and Paulo Ferreira. Less than half of that has been spent on new signings.

LOOK OUT FOR
Diego. The former Santos midfielder, long hailed as a huge talent, now gets his chance in Europe.

PREDICTION
Lightning is unlikely to strike twice, but a run to the knockout stages is more than likely, with goals galore at both ends along the way.


Back in the fold...Helder Postiga

Don't believe the hype

Unrealistic expectations are England's biggest problem

ONE ENGLAND PLAYER to another, as they walked out of the tunnel alongside their opponents: "Look, they're wearing carpet slippers! We'll soon see this lot off."

Less than two hours later and England had been thrashed 6-3 at Wembley by Hungary. The "carpet slippers" had danced nimbly around the old boots and a history lesson had been delivered.

It says much about that England generation that more was learned from the Hungarian defeat than from all subsequent setbacks put together, including England's recent 2-2 draw with Austria in Vienna.

On the plus side, few observers disagreed with Sven Goran Eriksson's squad selection and few quibbles could be made about his starting line-up. The wonders of hindsight raised questions over David Beckham as captain, Michael Owen as No 1 striker and David James as goalkeeper.

But what else? Beckham and Owen were significantly behind the rest of the team in terms of competitive match practice because Real Madrid had only just kicked off their League campaign. As for James, well, it is not his fault that England have lacked a secure international-class keeper since the days of Shilton and Clemence.

Releasing Beckham from the responsibility of captaincy might prove a useful exercise: free him from the diplomatic duties and let him enjoy being a 'mere' footballer again.

But these are minor matters. The overriding issue is the perpetual one of overriding expectation, for which the media must take much of the blame. Broadcasters hype the Premiership (with its entertainment born of rank bad defending) as the eighth wonder of the world. That intellectual insularity is then carried over, without any justification, into the international arena.

'The media must take much of the blame for raising expectations too high'

England play reasonably if forgettably, take a reasonable and forgettable result, and the world collapses.

Now, if England fail to win at home to Poland on October 12 next year, that's another matter. But then, we've been there before, so there must be a lesson to be learned, somewhere in the mists of time.

Weight of responsibility...captain Beckham is downcast after England's 2-2 draw away to Austria

Blatter skips Olympic drugs test

That Sepp Blatter, what a smoothie! Argentina have won their first Olympic gold, the Games are over for another four years, and still FIFA has not signed up to WADA.

In an increasingly fevered run-up to Athens the International Olympic Committee president Jacques Rogge had insisted that no sport could take part unless it had loyally adhered to the strictures of the World Anti-Doping Agency. FIFA and WADA, amid great fanfare in May, then signed a "letter of intent" at the FIFA centenary congress.

FIFA president Blatter, asked when the formal deed would be done, replied vaguely: "Whenever they wish to come to Zurich."

Of course, "they" never did. Football thus remains in limbo over doping discipline. This does not affect football's own testing programmes but it does open the way for ongoing cynicism over the various and contradictory punishments that will continue to be meted out.

Clearly, Rio Ferdinand's crime was not so much missing his test but missing it in the wrong year.

Chinese warning

A note of caution to European clubs planning on making a killing from selling merchandise in China: the pirates have beaten you to it. Barcelona flew out for some pre-season games and, of course, shirts and scarves were on sale near the grounds. One English fan bought two Barca shirts and two scarves. Cost in Europe: £100-plus; in Shanghai: £10.

Start time...Bakhramov checks his watch as Dienst tosses the coin before the 1966 Final

Respect due to Bakhramov

ENGLAND TRAVEL IN mid-October to Azerbaijan where, one hopes, they will pay due homage to the man who helped decide the outcome of the 1966 World Cup Final in their favour.

He was Tofik Bakhramov, one of those rare linesmen who was not afraid to stand up and be counted.

Bakhramov (new readers begin here) was the linesman who was confident that Geoff Hurst's shot bounced down from the crossbar behind Hans Tilkowski's goal-line before top-spinning back out again. Funnily enough, Bakhramov thus sealed a place in football history denied the now almost forgotten Swiss referee, Gottfried Dienst.

Here is a little competitive stimulus. Count how many times Bakhramov will be referred to over the next month as a 'Russian linesman'. Fact is, he was nothing of the sort. He was born and brought up in Azerbaijan at a time when the state shared membership of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It was a time when the adjectives 'Russian' and 'Soviet' were interchanged in blissful ignorance.

By all means call Bakhramov a 'Soviet linesman' (he was representing the Soviet federation, after all) or even an 'Azeri linesman' (or 'Azerbaijani linesman' if you have the time). But never Russian.

He was Azeri and proud of it – which is why the main stadium in the capital, Baku, bears his name. Not many match officials – whether referees or linesmen – receive that accolade.

As for whether it was a goal or not? Just look in the record books.

First, get your facts straight

I KNOW WHAT is wrong with the England team and, indeed, why English teams do not win the Champions League and UEFA Cup. They all play under the most intense restriction.

Their players all have only one leg.

How do I know? I read it every day in newspapers and on websites and I hear about it on radio and television – even though the evidence of the screen tells me differently. It's almost as if TV has translated the moon-landing conspiracy theory into football.

Evidence? Take Wednesday, September 8 as an example. An agency report circulating on various websites says: "Wayne Bridge [took] a knock on his Achilles." So poor Bridge has only one Achilles tendon? No wonder England had problems in Austria.

Another example: "Chelsea striker Didier Drogba is facing a battle to be fit for the weekend after injuring his ankle on international duty for the Ivory Coast."

Only one ankle? Did Chelsea really pay £26million for a striker with only one ankle? Think how much he would have cost if he had two of them.

And so on.

Study media coverage (not only in the UK) of the nuts and bolts of football and you find a perpetual carelessness about reporting basic, accurate facts. If the media cannot specify which leg or ankle or knee is damaged – and it's only going to be right or left, after all – then how much confidence can readers give to reports on weightier issues such as whether Sven Goran Eriksson remains the right man for England, whether the FA is structured effectively, whether agents can be controlled, what happens to all the money, etc?

And that is without straying into areas where the media maintains a cosy conspiracy of silence – such as the TV-dictated confetti of kick-off times.

Even Radio Five's prime commentator Alan Green has been dragged – screaming, Jonathan Pearce-style, one hopes – into the broadcast media's obsession with programming self-promotion. If the phone-in Six-O-Six is following a commentary match, be sure you will be told about it time and again.

Fans want, first of all, the basic, immediate information. Right or left. No grey areas. After all, this isn't politics.

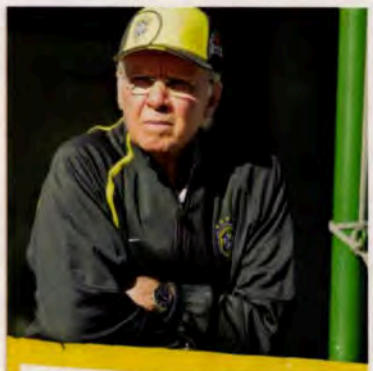
Zagallo's place in history

PELE REMAINS UNIQUE. He is about the only Brazilian football 'name' of the post-1950 years who freely admits he was not present in the Maracana on that fateful day when Uruguay hit back from a goal down to shock their World Cup hosts 2-1.

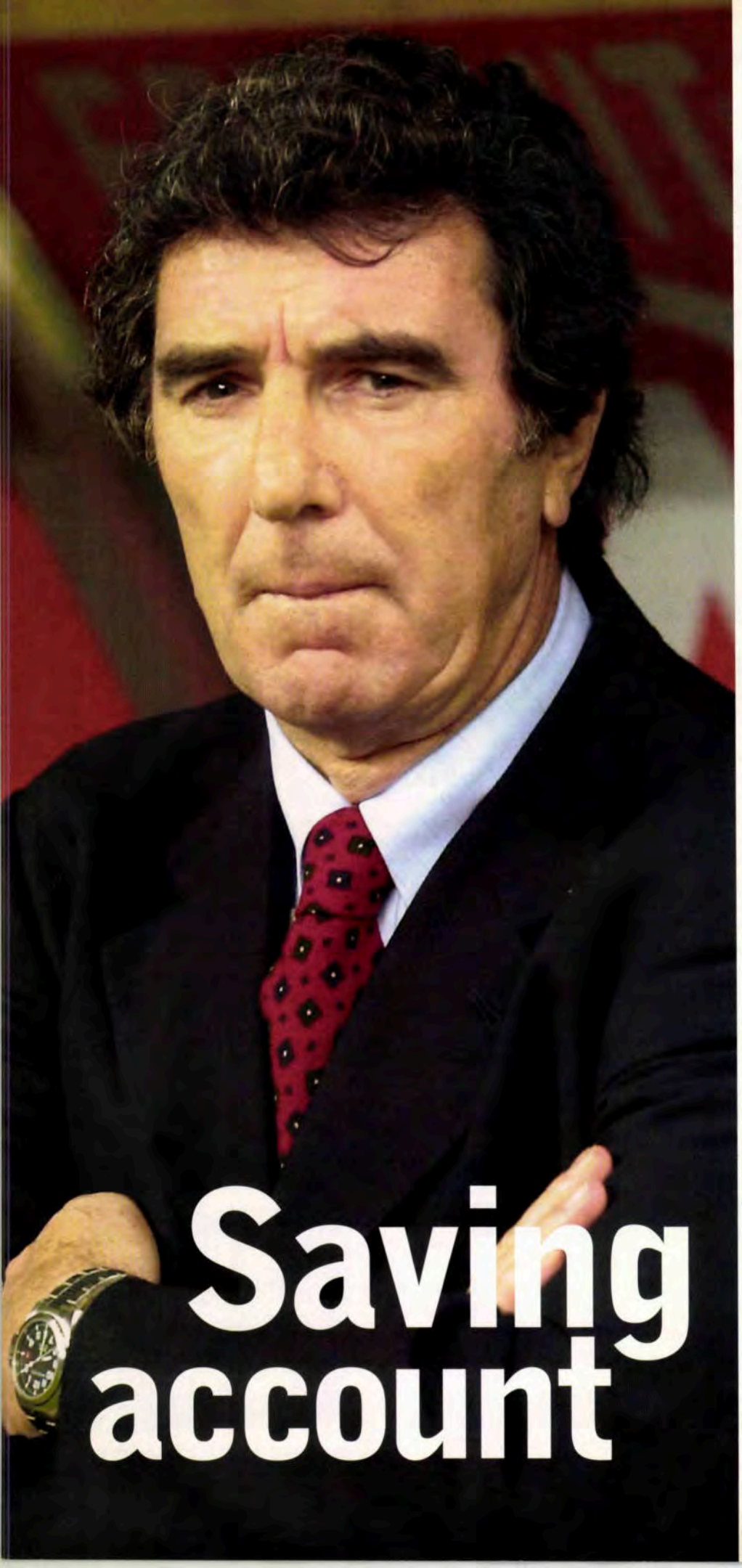
Just about every other veteran Brazilian player, administrator, coach and referee claims to have been in that 200,000 crowd (including, hilariously, several who were not even born at the time).

The latest eye-witness to have emerged is Mario Zagallo, reaching deep into his memory bank after a bronze bust of him, the first man to win the World Cup as player and then manager, was unveiled at the Maracana. "It's wonderful people can be honoured like this while they are still alive," said the dapper 73-year-old. "Maracana is like home to me. I built my playing career here…I watched the stadium being built…I was here to watch the 1950 Final."

Not the only one, either.



Yes, I remember it well...Mario Zagallo



Saving account

UEFA 1954 50 years 2004

In the latest in a special series of interviews to mark UEFA's golden jubilee, Italian great Dino Zoff takes a critical look at the current generation of goalkeepers

Who was the greatest goalkeeper of all time?

The names that come immediately to mind are Gordon Banks, Sepp Maier, Dino Zoff and Ladislao Mazurkiewicz. It's hard to pick out just one. Perhaps I should also say Lev Yashin, who of course is a sort of legend. But I can't really speak for what happened before the 1950s. I'm afraid I never saw anyone play before then and so I can't really judge, even though I know lots of people would mention Ricardo Zamora, of Spain.

Who was your idol?

When I started playing, Yashin and Banks were the two big names. Yashin was big and strong, physically commanding, a real spiderman of a goalkeeper. Banks was quicker, more agile and mobile. These were the two that I admired, and I think I became something of a mixture of both, a good cocktail of the best of each.

You did pretty well, considering that you have come to be seen worldwide as the face of Italian football, more than Paolo Rossi or Roberto Baggio.

That might be because I was lucky enough to have a long career and was always there when it mattered. I was in the team that won the European Championship in 1968 and the World Cup in 1982, and I won all there was to win with Juventus. It might be that people outside Italy seem to recognise my achievements more. And when UEFA nominated the Golden Players to mark its jubilee, I was the player chosen for Italy.

What would you say were your strengths as a keeper?

I was relatively tall for those days, at 1.83m, although that's nothing compared with the present generation. This helped me to collect high balls or reach high shots. But I would say my real speciality was coming out to block opponents on the ground.

Since your time, there have been three keepers generally regarded as great: Oliver Kahn, Peter Schmeichel and Gianluigi Buffon. Do you agree with this assessment?

Yes. Kahn has long been number one in Germany, a country with a big tradition of good goalkeepers. He seems to me to still be one of the best, even if last season wasn't so good for him. Schmeichel also had a long career. As for Buffon, he still has the best ahead of him – he's still young, and he made the breakthrough younger than any of us, being only 18 when he started in Serie A. Now he's already played for Italy about 50 times and he's still only 26 – I was that old when I made my debut for the national team!

People say that Dino Zoff is a cold person, and that that was the secret of your success as a player. Are they right?

Cold? Me? No! I always tried just to keep the things I did as simple as possible. I wasn't interested in having to put on a show because that would be senseless if you weren't actually playing well. I don't like goalkeepers making flashy saves for the sake of it. For example, in my day there was another very good goalkeeper, Castellini, who played for Torino, who was really spectacular but who was also very safe. It really all depends on your character.

People also say that keepers are different, big-heads, a bit mad. What do you think?

A goalkeeper needs to have a strong personality because his job is primarily a mental challenge. He has to spend a lot of time back there in his goal, alone, with nothing happening around him. It's not so easy for him to express himself as it is for his team-mates. He can't go chasing after an opponent or take a shot at goal. He has to wait and he has to keep his concentration. It may be that he's already let in a couple of goals and is thinking he must not let in a third, or it may be that suddenly there's a great shot from outside his penalty area and he can do nothing about it.

Talking about long-range shots, do you think too much was made of the two goals you let in from distance against Holland in the semi-final group of the 1978 World Cup? People at the time blamed you for both of them.

Who knows, maybe I should have done better. But whenever there were goals scored like that, it was always said to be the goalie's fault! The thing is that, unlike other players, when the goalie makes a mistake it's invariably decisive. If he slips off the tightrope, there's no safety net to catch him.

What do you consider to have been the toughest match of your career?

The game against Brazil at the 1982 World Cup. The save I made in the last minute went down in history – I stopped a header from Zico to keep us ahead 3-2 and we went into the semi-finals against all expectations. There were other tough matches, too – I remember the second leg of the 1977 UEFA Cup Final against Athletic Bilbao, when we had our backs to the wall for the last 15 minutes as if we were defending our wagons from Apaches.

What did you think of the goalkeeping last season, in the Champions League or at Euro 2004?

I was not particularly struck by it. In Portugal, especially, I saw so many goalkeepers making saves more or less at random, and that didn't impress me. There didn't seem to be many who were able to catch the ball with confidence; more often, they seemed to be making half-saves. I also felt some of them were moaning about the new ball, claiming that it was too light, but I don't really think this was the real reason. After all, a ball's weight and size are always the same, give or take a tiny fraction.

Memory men...(clockwise from top left) all-time greats Gordon Banks and Diego Maradona; Zoff lifts the World Cup in 1982; in goal against Brazil earlier in that tournament

'Few keepers at Euro 2004 were able to catch the ball with confidence'

What has changed for goalkeepers since your playing days?

Not a lot, to tell you the truth. There was a time when tactics were all-important and teams put the emphasis on the offside trap. This had its effect for the goalkeeper, of course, as he would suddenly find himself confronted one-on-one with an opposing striker. But now it seems things have gone back to what they were and goalkeepers basically do the same as I used to. When their own team is on the attack, they act almost like an additional libero. And they've also had to learn to clear back-passes better since they're no longer allowed to pick up the ball.

Today, more than before, goalkeepers have also become penalty-takers. Did you ever think of taking a spot-kick?

I came close to it! And I must say that my right foot was no worse than that of several other players! We went to penalties in the third-place match at the 1980 European Championship, and if [Fulvio] Collovati had not missed our ninth kick [which meant Czechoslovakia won] it would have been my turn next.

How else do you think football has changed in the past 20 years?

Apart from the effects of the offside rule, teams these days are much more compact and put their opponents under more constant pressure. The game has got so much faster, there's much less space for players and everything is more physical. There are more tackles and more free-kicks.

So you agree with those who maintain that Pele or Maradona would never be able to get away now with the kind of dribbling runs they produced?

Not at all! I'm sure that if they were still playing today, Pele and Maradona would still be able to do what they used to do. Pele could always improvise ways to beat his man any time he wanted. People tend to forget that even in those days players like that were marked tightly and came in for special attention. It's not that they had more space but that they knew how to create it for themselves. That's what made them all-time greats.

Who do you think is the latest all-time great?

Oh, since Maradona I think we're going to have to wait a little longer.

So you're not so impressed by the *galacticos*?

Put it this way: sometimes they seem to me less like *galacticos* than mere earthlings.

Dino Zoff was speaking exclusively to Fabio Licari of Gazzetta Dello Sport, *a member of the ESM (European Sports Magazines) group*

FOOTBALL MEMORIES

Brian Glanville on Yorkshireman George Raynor, who led Sweden to Olympic gold and a World Cup runners-up spot

Master tactician

GEORGE RAYNOR, a little Yorkshireman who was never more than, in his own words, "a second-class footballer", managed Sweden when they triumphantly won the Olympic title at Wembley in 1948, took third place in the 1950 World Cup with a radically weakened team, and finished runners-up in the 1958 World Cup in Stockholm.

"A good manager for a happy team," was the verdict of Nils Liedholm, a star member of the 1948 and 1958 teams.

As a youngster Raynor, an outside-right, played for Sheffield United, then, during the war, Aldershot. It was the Army that willy-nilly transformed his career.

Raynor was sent to Baghdad as an instructor at the officers' training college, and was put in charge of an Iraqi football team to go on an Arabian tour. In those days, Iraqi football was more eager than accomplished, but the tour proved a success, with the team winning two and drawing one of their five games. Raynor shrewdly wrote to the FA to report his achievement, and secretary Stanley Rous promised that he'd be remembered when the war ended.

Lo and behold, come 1946 he was offered the role of coach to Sweden, having had his name passed on to them by the FA.

Raynor's first game in charge was against Switzerland, noted for their use of catenaccio. To counteract this, the wily strategist devised original tactics, using defender Knud Nordahl as an inside-forward, and Sweden won 7-2.

I saw his Olympic team beat an abrasive Austria at Tottenham in 1948 on their way to taking gold, with a 3-1 win over a powerful Yugoslavia in the Final. But after that, the Italian and Spanish clubs swooped and the team was scattered to the winds, since, not until 1958, were professionals allowed to play for Sweden.

So Raynor laboriously rebuilt, touring the country to find new recruits. They included centre-forward Hasse Jeppson, Lennart 'Nacka' Skoglund, a teenage, flaxen-haired inside-left, and Kalle Palmer, another skilful young inside-forward. Their quality was undoubted since Sweden, remarkably, finished third at the 1950 World Cup in Brazil.

In 1953, just two weeks before Hungary came to Wembley and destroyed England 6-3, Raynor took his Sweden team to Budapest and drew 2-2. Unlike the tactically hapless England manager Walter Winterbottom, Raynor had done his homework. He properly identified withdrawn centre-forward Nandor Hidegkuti as the key man for Hungary, so told his centre-forward to shadow Hidegkuti in the first half, his inside-left in the second.

I got to know Raynor when he was appointed manager of Lazio during the 1954-55 season, after a short, unhappy spell at Juventus. Lazio were riven by boardroom hostilities at the time and had a squad containing a number of spent veterans. Yet Raynor turned the team around after devising his 'G Man' plan, which involved using Swede Sigge Lofgren to man-mark opposing stars. Lazio even beat Roma, managed by Liverpudlian Jesse Carver, 3-1 in the derby, against all the odds.

'Unlike England boss Winterbottom, Raynor did his homework before his side faced Hungary'

At the end of the season, in an extraordinary development, Carver accepted the managership of Coventry City back in England, then only in the Third Division South, and took Raynor with him as assistant. Alas, it didn't work. Before long, Carver had returned to Italy, to take over at Inter, then retook the reins with Sweden.

"We're the slowest team in the competition!" he proclaimed after a 2-1 win over Hungary at the 1958 World Cup. "But we'll still reach the Final!"

So they did, even if Brazil didn't, as he had forecast, "panic all over the show" when Sweden scored an early goal. Yet the fact that the hosts were even in the Final at all showed Raynor had worked wonders again.

On the ball...George Raynor

FROM THE ARCHIVES
OCTOBER 1973

Thirty-one years ago, an editorial comment reflected on the task facing England in their World Cup qualifying campaign. They were due to face Poland, a match that finished 1-1, ending England's hopes of competing at the 1974 finals.

"THE next few weeks will be anxious ones for England. The result of the Poland versus Wales match in the giant Slaski Stadium in Chorzow will have a direct bearing on the visit of the Poles to Wembley later this month.

Even now it is difficult to think of England not qualifying for the final stages of the 1974 World Cup...but it would be foolish to underestimate Poland. Our own Eric Batty saw them comprehensively beat Bulgaria, and a victory against Wales would give them a wonderful chance of making the last 16.

Sir Alf Ramsey can at least take heart from the sort of form shown by some England players so far this season. Tony Currie, in particular, seems to have blossomed since he played against Russia in the summer. He is the nearest we have got to finding a successor to Bobby Charlton – a midfield player with vision, a long pass and a good shot – and that is something. Peter Shilton seems to get better and better, and is now an outstanding goalkeeper. Colin Todd is back in the international reckoning and playing well with Derby County. Paul Madeley has been superb for Leeds United in their runaway start to the new campaign.

The real problems, of course, remain up front. England will have to score goals at Wembley. Mike Channon, Martin Chivers and Allan Clarke would appear to be the three most likely to play at Wembley; and on their day they are certainly the best combination. Chivers seems to come alive when Channon is around.

But they have to have the bullets to fire. A bolder, more imaginative approach by those playing in the midfield would be welcome. Wembley could be the graveyard. But there is no reason why it should be if England play up to their potential. But when was the last time that happened?"

FOOTBALL LINGO

#7 Apertura & Clausura

The season in most South American leagues is split into opening (apertura) and closing (clausura) championships. In some countries, a play-off between the two championship winners decides the overall champions.

WIN a top-quality Mitre football

QUIZ

mitre

Mitre has kindly donated a top-quality football for this month's Quiz. The first correct entry selected at random after October 22 will win the ball.

SEND YOUR ENTRY TO:
OCTOBER QUIZ, *World Soccer*, King's Reach Tower, Stamford St, London SE1 9LS

THIS MONTH'S POSER:

Name the famous stadium pictured

BOOK REVIEWS

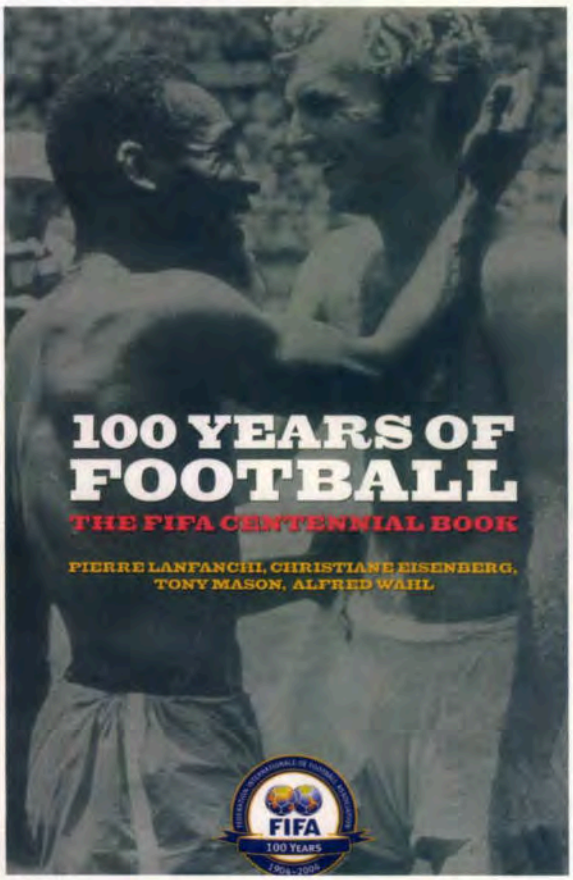
Anniversary tomes

Anniversary publications are often a rip-off, produced merely to cash in on event-driven kitsch. Happily that is a criticism which cannot be levelled against either FIFA's centennial tome, *100 Years of Football* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson), or UEFA's golden jubilee two-parter.

The FIFA book's UK price of £25 is a bargain compared with many of the garishly over-packaged volumes that bring little of service to a general understanding of the history of the game.

Further credit is due to the world authority for not falling into the old safe trap of commissioning an in-house author, who is restrained by loyalty, employment and lack of perspective from telling it, warts and all. FIFA, instead, commissioned four historians linked to De Montford University, Leicester, gave them free access to the archives and an apparently free hand to tell the story.

The four – Pierre Lanfanchi, Christiane Eisenberg, Tony Mason and Alfred Wahl – decided on a thematic that works well in terms of the history of the game and, notably, the history of women's football. The approach falls down, I feel, with more subjective issues, such as media, art and literature.



At least no punches are pulled in terms of FIFA's murky political involvements. For instance, president Joao Havelange is awarded a black mark for cosying up to the Argentinian junta at the time of the 1978 World Cup.

One more point: the FIFA story is told here with a Eurocentric focus. Of course, the headquarters and thus the foundation of decision-making have always lain in Europe. However, I feel the text misses the perspective of Latin America, while the history and progress – against the odds – of the game in the United States is not merely glossed over but also, too often, suffers snide dismissal.

UEFA's tome is split into two volumes: the first tells the story of UEFA and its institutions and people; the second tells the story of the federation's competitions – though I found the personalised approaches of a panel of international journalists made for a bumpy literary ride compounded by a lack of chronological clarity.

It's much longer than the FIFA book, it's a harder read and, oddly, it's nothing like as much interesting fun.

Keir Radnedge

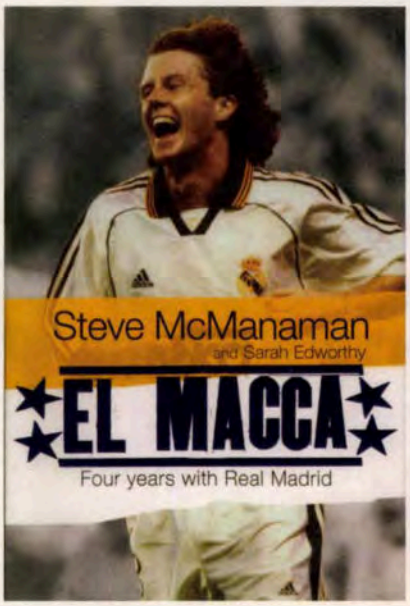
Real Madrid-fest

A clutch of books on Real Madrid this month. All, with the exception of Steve McManaman's account of his four years in Madrid, use David Beckham as their major selling point.

When Beckham Went To Spain by Jimmy Burns (Penguin, £16.99) is an absorbing account of Real Madrid's complex history, which takes in the signing of Beckham last summer. Burns has strong credentials. His previous football books, on Maradona and Barcelona, were very well received and his account of Madrid's last 100 years is well-researched and cleverly written. It would almost work better without the chapters on Beckham, in which the intrepid Burns travels to deepest Essex to investigate the midfielder's roots. The suspicion is that the author was persuaded by an over-zealous marketing department to add a couple of chapters on Beckham in a bid to broaden the book's appeal. Skip the Beckham chapters and you're left with a far more interesting study of Real Madrid as a Spanish institution.

Phil Ball is another English writer with a successful book on Spanish football, *Morbo*, under his belt. *An Englishman Abroad* (Ebury, £10.99) is his take on

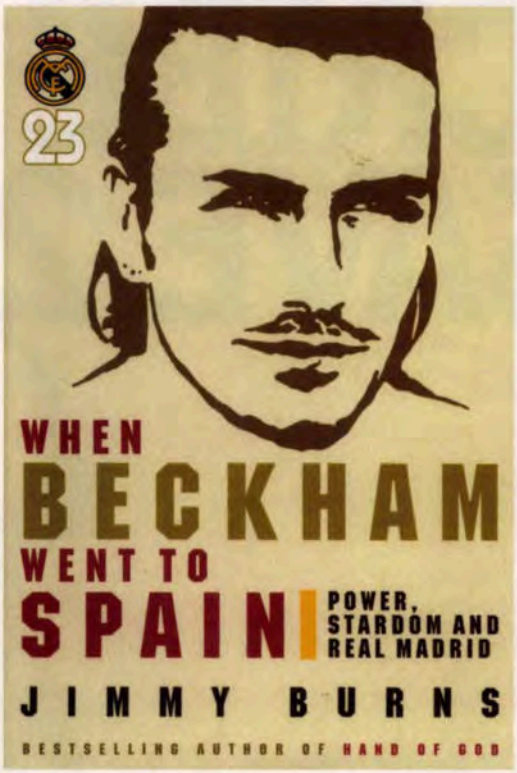
Beckham's first year in Spain. Ball offers some interesting opinions, particularly on Madrid's relationship with the rest of Spain. But he suffers from a degree of isolation from the main subject. Ball is based in San Sebastian, in the Basque region, and was not a frequent visitor to Madrid. So despite being based in Spain, Ball is still an outsider looking in. That in itself is no bad thing, but you long for



some opinions from those inside the club and those close to Beckham.

A similar problem confronts Alex Leith in *El Becks: A Season In The Sun* (VSP, £17.99). Leith gets round it by way of the format. He travels around Spain, following every Real Madrid game, home and away, through the season. The result is an entertaining insight into Spanish life through its football.

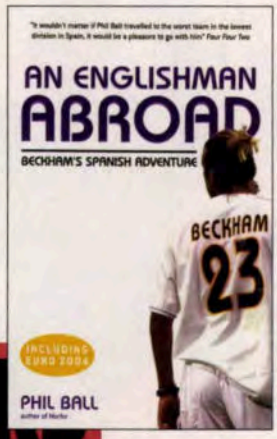
El Macca: Four Years With Real Madrid (Simon & Schuster, £17.99) serves as a timely reminder to Beckham (and now Michael Owen and Jonathan Woodgate)



about how to succeed as an Englishman in Spain. McManaman is arguably the most successful English footballer ever to play abroad, having won two European Cups, the World Club Cup and the Spanish League, as well as lots of friends along the way.

His book is a sizeable cut above the average footballer's tale. He makes intelligent use of a range of sources in what is the first insider's account of the Florentino Perez era at Real. I doubt if there will be any more eloquent or illuminating.

Gavin Hamilton



ROUND-UP

John Motson has long been this parish's favourite BBC commentator (he doesn't dabble in ice-skating or gymnastics). *Motty's Year* (BBC Books, £16.99) is his enjoyable account of the 2003-04 season, when he attempted to join the 92 Club, that intrepid band who have watched matches at every English League ground.

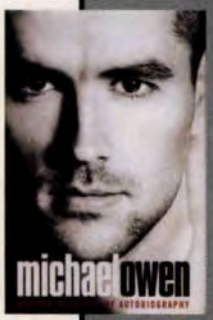
In *Goal! The Art of Scoring* (Highdown, £18.99), Jason Tomas attempts to discover the secrets to scoring. Whether the views of Ade Akinbiyi, one of the forwards quoted, can add much to that discussion is debatable. But it is an interesting exercise nonetheless.

Paul Brown claims responsibility for *Balls: Tales From Football's Nether Regions* (Mainstream, £9.99), which is essentially a rehash of very old anecdotes – Terry Venables' Thingummywig, Bob Primrose Wilson, you get the picture – and will probably find a place in some poor sod's Christmas stocking.

A far more worthwhile present would be *Flick To Kick* by Daniel Tatarsky (Orion, £7.99). Billed as an illustrated history of Subbuteo, it's a fantastic trip down memory lane.

The most significant new arrival on the biography front is Michael Owen's *Off the Record* (CollinsWillow, £18.99), which has been well ghosted by Paul Hayward.

There are very few revelations, but there is an interesting contrast with the autobiography of David Beckham, with whom Owen shares an agent, publisher and now club. While Beckham's book is littered with references to his wife and children, Owen is at pains to keep his family life private. There's a lesson there somewhere.



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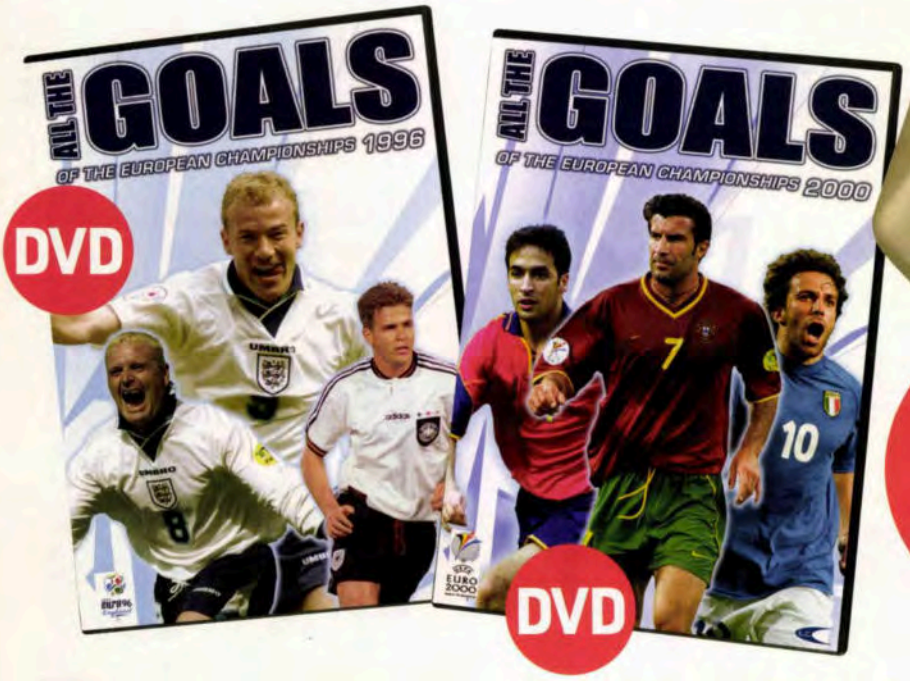

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Hollow victory for Argentina

Jim Holden reports from Athens on a competition struggling to find a purpose

OLYMPIC GAMES

SOCCER AT THE Olympics has never been as shambolic as it was at the 2004 Athens Games. Crowds were sparse, players were mostly indifferent and sponsors surely felt short-changed. It was nearly as bad as the appalling nonsense of the tennis event.

Only the desire of Argentina to earn some national pride by winning the nation's first Olympic gold medal since 1952, and the unlikely progress of Iraq to the semi-finals, gave the football a semblance of credibility and interest.

The best team won. But, in truth, there was only one real team in it.

Argentina were victorious in every match, and did not concede a goal. It helped that, alone among the competing nations, they chose a clutch of superstar players from the very best professional clubs to bolster their squad.

Javier Saviola was recruited from Barcelona, Gabriel Heinze played despite the fury of Manchester United, who had bought him earlier in the summer, and there were also World Cup veterans Roberto Ayala and Kily Gonzalez.

As it turned out all were upstaged by the new young hope of Argentinian soccer, 20-year-old striker Carlos Tevez. He was top scorer with eight goals, including the only one of the Final against Paraguay.

Some reckoned the stocky Tevez to be the new Diego Maradona; a foolish comparison despite the fact he is currently playing for one of the legend's old clubs, Boca Juniors.

Tevez certainly has talent, however, and he will soon enough be playing at a top European club. But even his shining light could not hide the fact that the Final was stultifyingly poor.

The spectacular Olympic stadium was barely a third full as the match was played at 10am so as not to clash with the evening athletics events watched by capacity crowds.

Timing is all, they say. In this case, the timing proved how irrelevant Olympic soccer has become. The game matched the atmosphere. Paraguay were so robustly negative that they finished with only nine men. Argentina did just enough to claim their cherished gold.

It came with a certain irony. A few hours later the country's basketball team won gold in what was a far more prestigious competition, in which they had overcome the American dream team, full of NBA stars, in the semi-finals.

Serious competitors...but Iraq faltered with a medal in sight

Iraq revival

The only time soccer broke into the general Olympic consciousness was when Iraq played. Their team had been resurrected to international competition despite the ravages of war and raging civil violence, and had incredibly won a place at the Games.

"It's not the winning but the taking part that counts," says the old, careworn Olympic ideal. For once, it fitted reality as far as the Iraqi team were concerned, although they seemed quite keen on winning too.

A 4-2 victory in their opening match against Portugal was a stunning result. Luis Boa Morte was sent off, and there was much violence on and off the pitch, with Iraqi fans firing a hail of missiles at Portuguese players. Such behaviour by the supporters of any other nation might well have brought expulsion. But such a move against Iraq was far too politically sensitive to contemplate.

Iraq won their second match against Costa Rica, and despite a

Going for gold...the Argentina goal comes under threat during the Olympic Final against Paraguay

subsequent defeat by Morocco finished top of their group. Further joy arrived with a narrow quarter-final win against Australia, one of the few other sides taking matters seriously.

And there the feelgood factor ended. Suddenly, with a medal at stake, the Iraqis crumbled, losing the semi-final to Paraguay and the bronze-medal match to Italy. Far worse, their players felt, was that US president George Bush had muscled in on their sporting journey by claiming it proved that Iraq was becoming a settled society once again.

The footballers deeply resented being used as political pawns, and you had to wonder whether this distraction explained their demise on the field. The bronze-medal play-off against Italy took place amid a sombre atmosphere in front of a paltry 5,000 crowd. The day before an Italian journalist had been executed by militants in Baghdad.

Lack of passion

Traditional football passion had been conspicuously absent all along. Hosts Greece had stunned the game by winning the Euro 2004 tournament two months earlier, yet their Olympic team evoked little frenzy, failing to win a match and finishing bottom of their group. It was almost as if taking Olympic soccer seriously might detract from the real glory they had celebrated.

If there is a lesson to learn it is that football has no place in the modern Olympic setting. Spectators know it is second-rate, while logistics mean that many matches are held far away from the Games' main city, which only fuels a sense of dislocation.

Soccer, like tennis, has events of its own that mean far more to the players, but at least Argentina cared about winning their gold medal. At least in the shape of Tevez they gave global football a new hero to admire.

Will the Argentinians be so keen to defend their title in 2008? I somehow doubt it. But don't expect soccer to have been booted out of the Olympics.

Next time they are in Beijing, the capital of a nation with an awesomely vast potential football market waiting to be tapped. The great multinational sponsors see riches to be made in China – and soccer will be a convenient vehicle for the ride.

Over here, Jurgen...but the new Germany team boss has other things to think about during his first game in charge

Klinsmann finds cupboard bare

GERMANY

ANYONE IN GERMANY who thought new national team coach Jurgen Klinsmann would rip up the teamsheet after their Euro 2004 horror story and start afresh has had to think again. The squad for his first game in charge – a 3-1 friendly win away to Austria, with Kevin Kuranyi hitting a hat-trick – offered very little in the way of change. Only four players who did not travel to Euro 2004 were included – Werder Bremen stopper Frank Fahrenhorst, his midfielder clubmate Tim Borowski, Schalke frontrunner Gerald Asamoah and young Chelsea centre-back Robert Huth – and the last two were only called up after late withdrawals.

Klinsmann has stated the door will always be open for new faces, and the likes of Bayern Munich right-back Andreas Gorlitz, Hannover central defender Per Mertesacker and Aston Villa midfielder Thomas Hitzlsperger could all force their way in. Yet it is hard to escape the conclusion that German hopes for a successful World Cup 2006 on home soil will largely be dependent on the players assembled by former boss Rudi Voller.

The harsh truth is that not nearly enough young German talent is coming through these days. "Jurgen Klinsmann is a baker by trade but even he can't cook up new footballers," opined Stuttgart coach Matthias Sammer.

That said, Klinsmann has clearly begun to impose his authority, ruffling more than a few feathers by dispensing with the services of long-serving national team supervisor Bernd Pfaff and opting to replace Oliver Kahn as captain with Michael Ballack. Klinsmann also intends to rotate his goalkeepers, another move that will not please Kahn.

Brazilian Ailton, League top scorer last season with 28 goals for Werder Bremen, was voted Footballer of the Year for 2003-04, the first time a foreigner has taken the award. The forward, who moved to Schalke in the close season, was not celebrating a fortnight later, however, after being sent off against Hansa Rostock for slapping two opponents. He was subsequently handed a four-week ban.

Nick Bidwell

Blocked...Benfica (in red) v Anderlecht

PORTUGAL

Poor start in Europe

Portuguese clubs made a lacklustre start to the European season, with FC Porto beaten by Valencia in the European Supercup, Benfica failing to qualify for the group stage of the Champions League after losing to Anderlecht, and Uniao Leiria losing to Lille in one of the three InterToto Cup Finals.

Porto's defeat, in Monaco, clearly showed that it will take time for them to adjust to life without playmaker Deco and inspirational coach Jose Mourinho.

New Spanish boss Victor Fernandez has plenty of talent at his disposal after the recent signings of Ricardo Quaresma, Giorgios Seitaridis, Diego and Luis Fabiano, but does not have long to get his act together, with several important matches just around the corner.

Benfica fans blamed new coach Giovanni Trapattoni for their Champions League exit, claiming his tactics were too negative. The Italian was already under pressure after a 1-0 defeat by Porto in the Portuguese Supercup.

Pedro Pinto

BELGIUM

Cartier makes La Louviere tick

Albert Cartier, deemed not good enough to coach a Second Division side in his native France, is the man behind the astonishing rise of unfancied La Louviere to the top of the Belgian First Division.

The success of Cartier, sacked by Gueugnon a year ago and the successor to Ariel Jacobs, is all the more remarkable given the club's tiny budget and the sale, for financial reasons, of star player Peter Odemwingie, to Lille.

Jacobs, meanwhile, has been named technical director at Genk, who also have a new coach in former Twente Enschede boss Rene Vandereycken.

Odemwingie's Nigerian compatriot Tosin Dosunmu was League top scorer with five goals in four games for Westerlo, but he has now joined Austria Wien. Dosunmu's replacement is Peter Utaka, from Second Division Patro Maas-Mechelen. He is the brother of Lens striker John Utaka.

Sandy Martens, Gent's new signing from Club Brugge, faces a long period

Few tears as Zlatan departs

HOLLAND

AJAX COACH Ronald Koeman seems to be the only person regretting the sale of Zlatan Ibrahimovic to Juventus. The board are delighted with the £13.5million raised by the move, opposition defenders will be glad to see the back of a player notorious for elbowing them, and even his own team-mates won't find it hard to say goodbye since the Sweden striker was not a popular figure at the club.

The bad blood between Ibrahimovic and his Ajax team-mates was evident during the August friendly between Sweden and Holland. After just a few minutes he kicked Rafael Van der Vaart's ankle, forcing him to be substituted. Later on, he kicked John Heitinga in the back.

Afterwards Van der Vaart demanded a public apology, and order seemed to be restored when Ibrahimovic did say sorry. However, the injured Van der Vaart looked like a bear with a sore head when the Swede scored a superb goal against NAC in the League a few days later, dribbling around several defenders before calmly slotting home.

A transfer seemed near and in the end Ibrahimovic was sold on the final day of the transfer window. That has left Koeman with a problem, since the expected replacement – Ivorian striker Arouna Kone from Roda JC – failed a medical and the transfer deadline had passed. Now Wesley Sonck will be handed the main striking role, but the Belgian has not yet lived up to expectations.

Last hurrah...Ibrahimovic and Sonck celebrate an Ajax goal

On the plus side, Ajax did sign Argentinian Olympic gold medallist right-winger Mauro Rosales from Newell's Old Boys. Meanwhile, Hatem Trabelsi's projected move to Arsenal fell through, but the Tunisian defender hasn't returned to training because of illness, and Koeman has already said he does not figure in his plans.

Ajax surprisingly lost 4-2 to Utrecht in the Super Cup. Substitute Wesley Sneijder scored one of the Amsterdam club's goals and promptly swore at Koeman to show his anger at having not been handed a starting berth. The youngster, who is fighting four other midfielders for three places, had his wages docked.

New national coach Marco Van Basten wasted no time in introducing new blood, handing debuts to the relatively unknown Romeo Castelen (Feyenoord), Dave Van den Bergh (Utrecht), Collins John (Fulham) and Jan Kromkamp (AZ) in the Sweden game, which ended in a 2-2 draw.

Klaas-Jan Droppert

on the sidelines after suffering serious ligament damage in a game against his former club. Meanwhile, St Truiden have lost defender Nicky Hayen for the rest of the year with a cartilage injury.

Lokeren have signed Mark Hendrickx from Anderlecht but coach Frankie Van der Elst has been forced to omit another talented midfielder, Davy De Beule, on the orders of president Roger Lambrecht, who did not want the player's contract extended because he wanted to cash in on him. Lambrecht was annoyed when De Beule rejected a big-money move to Standard Liege.

However, Standard have signed veteran former international defender Philippe Leonard, ending his eight-year exile in France to rejoin the club with whom he launched his career. Among Leonard's new team-mates is former Portugal winger Sergio Conceicao, who was sent off on his debut only 11 minutes after coming on as a substitute against Cercle Brugge.

Nicholas Harling

SWITZERLAND

Basle bite the dust

Basle coach Christian Gross admitted his team lacked concentration during the second, away leg of their Champions League third qualifying round tie against Internazionale.

"We were a goal down through Adriano after just 39 seconds and 2-0 down by the 12th minute," Gross said of the 4-1 defeat, which put Basle out 5-2 on aggregate. "We never recovered. We have to go back to the drawing board." Brazilian striker Adriano scored three of Inter's five goals and was just too fast for Basle's out-of-form defender Murat Yakin, still apparently not fully recovered from the surgery he underwent before Euro 2004.

Basle's defeat completed a whitewash for Swiss clubs in Europe. Young Boys' Champions League debut was short-lived, going out 5-2 on aggregate to Red Star Belgrade in the second qualifying round; French World Cup winner Christian Karembeu failed to turn things around for Servette in the UEFA Cup, his new club going out 5-1 to Ujpest of Hungary; and last season's domestic Cup winners Wil 1900 also exited the UEFA Cup, 4-2 to Banska Bystrica of Slovakia.

At home, Aarau's Martin Rueda and Servette's Marco Schallibaum have been fired because of poor results. Andy Egli, dismissed as St Gallen's chief executive officer earlier this year, has succeeded Rueda.

Grasshopper have signed Chelsea reserve keeper Marco Ambrosio with first-choice Peter Jehle likely to be out for several months through injury.

Ivar von Rulach

REPUBLIC OF IRELAND

Farrelly opts for Bohemians lifestyle

Former Republic of Ireland forward Gareth Farrelly has been appointed player-manager of Dublin club Bohemians, becoming the youngest manager in the Eircom League's top division at 29. The ex-Aston Villa, Everton and Bolton player takes over from Stephen Kenny, who is now with Derry City.

Shelbourne attracted a crowd of 24,000 to Lansdowne Road for their shock 0-0 draw with Deportivo La Coruna in the Champions League third qualifying round first leg. Although Shels lost the return 3-0, their performance certainly improved the image of the Eircom League.

Dublin City coach Roddy Collins has brought in veteran former England midfielder Carlton Palmer, 38, and ex-Nigeria striker Efan Ekoku, 37, in a bid to save the club from relegation.

Manchester City striker Jonathan Macken became the latest England-born player to declare for the Republic, making his debut in the 1-1 friendly draw with Bulgaria in Dublin in August.

Sean Creedon

LIECHTENSTEIN

Vaduz quick out of blocks

Vaduz made a great start to the season, winning their first three games in the Swiss Challenge League (Second Division) and beating Irish side Longford in the UEFA Cup.

The capital club, who only just missed out on promotion to the Swiss top flight last term, have made three new signings – Ghanaian Eyke Bismark (Fiorentina), Thomas Weller (Winterthur) and Eduardo Dos Santos (Wohlen).

Eschen-Mauren signed national team striker Ronny Buchel from Chur, and also have a new coach in former national Under-19s boss Alfons Dobler.

Graeme Crawford

Enough is enough...Brondby's Dan Anton Johansen helped influence a return to work by Danish players

Strike hits Superliga

DENMARK

DANISH SOCCER HAS been in turmoil on and off the pitch, with FC Copenhagen dispatched to a humiliating 5-0 home defeat by Gorica of Slovenia in the Champions League and a players' strike forcing the cancellation of one round of Superliga matches.

FC Copenhagen had done the hard part in the first leg of their second qualifying round tie by winning 2-1 in Slovenia. But at the Parken stadium they were hit by a series of counter-attacking sucker punches.

"In sporting terms it was a catastrophe, the worst in my time at the club," admitted Copenhagen supremo Flemming Ostergaard. "Financially it was a major blow too. Now we will have to find alternative sources of finance. And that's not easy for Danish clubs."

Copenhagen have also struggled badly in the domestic League. That's when the teams have been playing, of course. The strike was called because of a dispute about whether clubs should receive compensation when a youngster under the age of 23 departs when his contract has run out. Under widely accepted international regulations, the club who have developed a young player receive a fee from the player's new team. But the Danish players' union, in their wisdom, decided to fight against this, claiming it was a restraint of trade.

The Superliga clubs, naturally, took a hard line, and received strong backing from fans. After one round of League games had been called off, common sense prevailed, aided by the decision of Brondby's Per Nielsen and Dan Anton Johansen to return to work a day early and effectively break the strike.

Suspension of industrial action came just in time to allow Brondby and AaB Aalborg to fulfil their UEFA Cup second qualifying round ties. AaB came through safely against Zalgiris of Lithuania, but Brondby could only draw 1-1 at home to Latvian club Ventspils and were eliminated on away goals.

At least Brondby's League form was holding up, with their 1-0 win over leaders Silkeborg putting them joint top.

Jim Holden

NORWAY

Tight squeeze in Europe

Norwegian clubs had to go through some serious nailbiting in European competition, but in the end all four representatives made it through to the next round.

Rosenborg qualified for the Champions League group stage after a year's absence with a 5-3 aggregate win over Maccabi Haifa of Israel. The Trondheim side were leading 2-1 after the first leg, at home, but appeared set to exit after going 2-0 down in the first half in the return. Despite some incessant pressure against a Maccabi side reduced to 10 men after the sending off of Najuan Graieb, Rosenborg seemed incapable of finding the goal that would keep them in the tie until Harald Brattbakk curled a free-kick into the top corner two minutes into injury-time. Daniel Braaten and Orjan Berg scored in extra-time to seal victory.

Odd Grenland also scored in time added on to beat Lithuanian side Ekranas 4-3 on aggregate in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round, while Bodo/Glimt not only scored in injury-time to take their tie against Levadia Tallinn of Estonia into extra-time, but then were also taken to a shoot-out, which they won 8-7.

Stabaek were the only comfortable victors, beating Finland's FC Haka 6-2 on aggregate, also in the UEFA Cup.

Rosenborg strengthened their squad ahead of their Champions League group campaign by signing Norway forward Thorstein Helstad from Austria Wien.

Another national team striker, Morten Gamst Pedersen, has joined Blackburn from Tromso.

Sigurd Odegaard

FINLAND

Flak for Antti

Antti Muurinen's position as national coach came under renewed pressure after Finland lost 2-1 in Romania in their opening World Cup qualifier.

Muurinen has been accused of lacking authority, and his team selections have also been called into question. In the Romania game, the coach kept faith with captain Jari Litmanen, even though he has hardly played a full game for his club side, FC Lahti. Although 'Litti's' experience and vision are still vital, he is far from fully fit. Many observers would have liked to see Alexei Eremenko Junior given a

bigger role. He was Finland's best player after coming on as a substitute.

FC Haka are marching to the League title, with veteran Russian forward Valery Popovitch still their star turn. However, they were booted out of the UEFA Cup by Norway's Stabaek, 6-2 on aggregate.

HJK Helsinki have sold national team stopper Toni Kallio to Norway's Molde.

Pentti Hietanen

ICELAND

Record crowd sees historic win

Iceland recorded one of the finest results in their history when sweeping to a convincing 2-0 win over Italy in a friendly at Reykjavik's Laugardalsvollur National stadium in front of a record crowd of just over 20,000.

Goals from Chelsea striker Eidur Gudjohnsen and Lillestrom midfielder Gylfi Einarsson midway through the first half sunk the Italians in Marcello Lippi's first game in charge.

The FA took advantage of an apparent loophole in FIFA regulations for friendlies by installing wooden pallets as temporary terracing at the ramshackle stadium. As a result they crammed 20,204 fans into a ground with a registered capacity of only 14,000.

Domestic title hopefuls FH took their good League form into the UEFA Cup, seeing off Scottish side Dunfermline 4-3 on aggregate to reach the first round proper. FH were leading the Icelandic League by three points from IBV with two rounds remaining.

Rab Christie

ESTONIA

Expansion at the top

The FA has decided to increase the size of both the First and Second Divisions from eight clubs to 10. It means there will be no automatic relegation at the end of this season.

Andres Must

WALES

Caersws start in style

Caersws, normally slow starters, kicked off the new term with three wins out of three, scoring 11 goals in the process, to head the table.

Carmarthen also won their first three games, but then lost the services of coach Mark Aizlewood, who has been appointed assistant to fellow former international Ian Rush at English fourth level side Chester City.

Champions Rhyl have signed striker Peter Smith from Bangor City following the suspension of Andy Moran, last season's League top scorer, for seven and a half months for failing a drugs test.

Tim Hicks scored five goals in Haverfordwest's 6-1 drubbing of new boys Airbus UK in the third round of matches.

Mel Thomas

NORTHERN IRELAND

Glentoran look to League

Glentoran's hopes of a potentially lucrative UEFA Cup first round draw were dashed when they lost 3-1 on aggregate to Swedes Elfsborg. But despite the reverse, Roy Coyle's side look to be the team to beat when the League commences later this month.

There was a bizarre episode at Larne, where player-manager John Devine was "requested" to relinquish the coaching side of his role but remain as a player. Not surprisingly, the 35-year-old central defender declined and rejoined former club Coleraine. Apparently Larne were unhappy that Devine had not replaced a host of departed players, five of whom had joined former Larne coach Tommy Kincaid at relegated Glenavon.

Devine's replacement is former Waterford manager Jimmy McGeough.

Roy Kitson

Stirring up Italians...Tobias Hysen

Hysen hot property

SWEDEN

DJURGARDENS FORWARD Tobias Hysen has become one of the stars of the season after he put his side 2-0 ahead against Juventus in the first leg of their Champions League qualifying tie in Turin to give the Swedes real hope of performing a giantkilling act.

Although the Italians put the record straight, pulling back to 2-2 then winning 4-1 in the return, the 22-year-old son of former Swedish national team captain and Liverpool favourite Glenn Hysen still managed to shine. Since then, Hysen, who plays either wide on the left or up front, has been watched by several Italian clubs, including Fiorentina, his father's old side.

Halmstads and Malmo were joined by IFK Gothenburg in the title race after Bosse Johansson's side put together a series of impressive results, including a 5-1 win over local rivals Orgryte.

Gothenburg also have their own starlet in forward George Mourad, who has formed an impressive partnership with Peter Ijeh. Veteran midfielder Niclas Alexandersson has been running the show and was recently recalled to the national squad for the friendly against Holland. The match, which finished 2-2, was Lars Lagerback's first in charge alone following the departure of co-coach Tommy Soderberg.

Pentti Hietanen

Juninho spurs on Celtic

SCOTLAND

NEW SIGNING JUNINHO helped Celtic to a 1-0 win over Rangers in the first Old Firm clash of the season and extend their 100 per cent League record to four games.

The Brazilian midfielder's arrival from Middlesbrough eased the growing disquiet among Celtic fans that their squad was not strong enough to compete in both the domestic campaign and the Champions League. Until Juninho signed, manager Martin O'Neill's only notable transfer deal of the summer was to bring in Senegal striker Henri Camara on a one-year loan from Wolverhampton in an attempt to replace departed top scorer Henrik Larsson.

Alan Thompson scored late on against Rangers to extend Celtic's winning run against their Old Firm rivals to seven games.

Rangers boss Alex McLeish had a busy summer in the transfer market but his new-look side made a poor start. The defeat by Celtic came days after they were knocked out of the Champions League by CSKA Moscow, 3-2 on aggregate in the third qualifying round.

Aberdeen, who finished second bottom last season, enjoyed a good start to the new campaign, lying second, unbeaten and without having conceded a goal in their first four League games under new manager Jimmy Calderwood. His former club, Dunfermline, made an inauspicious return to Europe after 34 years, losing 4-3 on aggregate to Icelandic part-timers FH in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round.

Alan Fairley

Heading for victory...Juninho takes on Rangers

Hounded...Umit Ozat (right, in action against Georgia) believes the crowd's behaviour influenced the result

Trauma in Trabzon

TURKEY

TWO YEARS AGO Turkey's national team were heroes after finishing third at the World Cup. But if their failed Euro 2004 qualifying campaign was not enough to relegate them to the status of mere mortals, their 1-1 home draw with Georgia in the first qualifier for the 2006 World Cup certainly did the job.

The game, played in Trabzon on the eastern Black Sea coast, was an unmitigated disaster on so many fronts that the media did not know where to focus its ire.

First, Turkish fans had banked on winning what was Ersun Yanal's first game as coach. Second, the football was uninspired, unfocused, and played by what the pundits would say were far too many of the old crowd – where was Yanal's stamp on the team? Third, Hasan Sas was sent off in tears after picking up a second yellow card, having earlier had a goal disallowed for handling.

Above all, where was the crowd? The Avni Aker stadium had more empty seats than the early rounds of the Olympic women's weightlifting competition. Those who did attend spent their energies cheering for former Trabzon player Shota Arveladze of Georgia, cursing the Turkish internationals from rival club Fenerbahce and demanding the reinstatement of newly-replaced local favourite Haluk Ulusoy at the head of the Turkish federation.

"Man! It was all 'Shota! Shota!' from start to finish. I really don't get this. What sin did we commit? Aren't we the children of this country?" wailed midfielder Umit Ozat, who plays his club football for Fenerbahce. "Was this an away game for Georgia or not? The Trabzon crowd cost us those points."

Yanal, much praised as the next big thing in Turkish coaching for his shaping of Genclerbirligi before taking over the national job, now faces questions about why he played it safe with a bunch of past-it stars and failed to impose his own system, and maybe even discipline, on a wilful core of veterans convinced that they know best. "Yanal is banal," declared one disillusioned football watcher.

The coach also presented Fenerbahce with a problem, having given Rustu Recber the starting role in goal. The Istanbul club have just brought Rustu back home from an ill-fated spell with Barcelona, but in the meantime Volkan Demirel has had a stellar run as No 1 both at club level and with the national team.

Suna Erdem

GREECE

Euro champs come unstuck

Otto Rehhagel's Euro 2004 heroes fell to earth with a bump in their first 2006 World Cup qualifier, losing 2-1 away to neighbours Albania. Greece were hit by two early goals, and although Stelios Giannakopoulos pulled one back just before half-time, the home side won through.

Rehhagel appeared happy to stick with the players who won Euro 2004 after naming only one newcomer in the squad for the game. PAOK Salonika striker Dimitris Salpigidis was drafted in to replace Demis Nikolaidis, who has retired from international football to focus on his new role as president of AEK Athens.

The start of the domestic League campaign has been brought forward two weeks to September 19 after police assurances that they had the manpower to provide security for both the new season and the Paralympics, which follow on from the Olympic Games in Athens. Originally, the League programme was due to kick off on October 3 because of fears that the police would not be able to cope with both events at the same time.

Lou Economopoulos

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Fans doubt Blaz can double up

Bosnians have voiced doubts about whether national team coach Blaz Sliskovic can successfully continue in the post while also holding the coaching reins at his new club, Hajduk Split.

Sliskovic's acceptance of the position with the Croatian side raised the temperature ahead of Bosnia-Herzegovina's first World Cup qualifier, against Spain in Zenica. Mirsad Hibic, the recently-retired international defender, has been touted as a successor to Sliskovic if results go against him with the national team.

Bosnia-Herzegovina's club sides had a terrible campaign in European competition, with Siroki Brijeg defeated by Neftchi of Azerbaijan on away goals at the first hurdle of the Champions League, while Zeljeznicar and Modrica were both humiliated by Bulgarian sides in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round (9-1 on aggregate to Litex Lovech and 8-0 to Levski Sofia respectively).

Zdravko Reic

MACEDONIA

Rabotnicki take champions' scalp

Rabotnicki Kometal enjoyed a stunning 4-0 away win over champions Pobeda Prilep to extend their 100 per cent record in the new campaign to four games.

Vardar Skopje have sold Aleksandar Vasoski to Metalurh Donetsk of Ukraine and Vlatko Grozdanovski to Cypriot champions Omonia.

The national team got off to a winning start in the World Cup qualifiers, beating Armenia 3-0 in Skopje. However, Goce Sedloski, one of the four captains that coach Dragan Kanatlarovski rotates, is unlikely to be available for every game. "He is playing in Japan and travelling every month when we have qualifiers would take too much out of him," said the coach.

Michel Stojmanovski

MALTA

Warning for Wanderers

Sliema Wanderers, last season's Double winners, were handed a stern warning about the new campaign when beaten 3-1 by last season's runners-up Birkirkara in the Super Cup.

To rub salt into Sliema's wounds, key defender Carlo Mamo left for Marsaxlokk, who also signed Argentinian Cesar Paiber from Hibernians. Sliema replaced Mamo with Miguel Mifsud, also from Hibernians.

Domenico Aquilina

Heading for defeat...Serbia & Montenegro line up before their 6-0 trouncing by Argentina

Djoric sacked after Olympic disaster

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

FA TECHNICAL DIRECTOR Milovan Djoric was fired and chairman Dragan Stojkovic came in for fierce criticism following the country's disastrous showing in the Olympic football tournament.

Serbia & Montenegro finished bottom of their group after three defeats out of three – 6-0 against Argentina, 5-1 against Australia, and 3-2 against Tunisia.

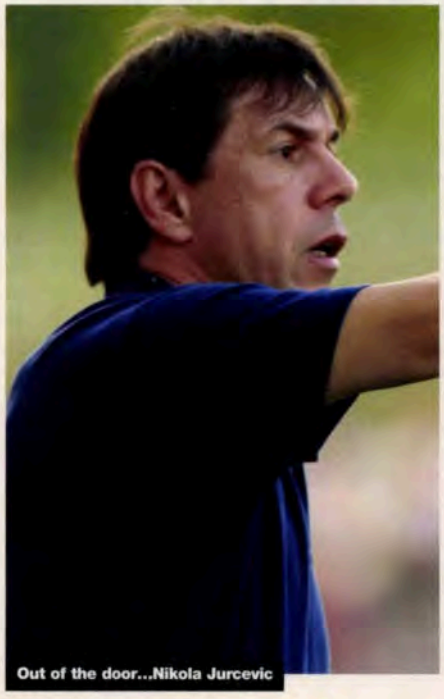
Admittedly, the side fielded was a far cry from the one that finished runners-up in the recent European Under-21 Championship finals, and the squad for the Under-23 Olympic tournament did not include any of the three overage players permitted due to an FA error. Nevertheless, Serbia & Montenegro's performance in Greece was dismal.

Djoric, who had a short, unsuccessful spell as senior national team coach in 2001, refused to accept the criticism but said he would leave as technical director and continue his work with the FA of Serbia.

Red Star's dream of reaching the Champions League group stage for the first time ended with a sobering 5-0 defeat by PSV in Eindhoven following a 3-2 win in Belgrade.

Partizan qualified for the UEFA Cup first round but did not impress during their 1-0 aggregate victory over Otelul of Romania. Zeleznik exited the competition 5-4 to Steaua Bucharest, with Buducnost Banatski Dvor also falling, on away goals to Maribor of Slovenia after a 2-2 draw.

Vladimir Novak



Out of the door...Nikola Jurcevic

Early changes at Big Two

CROATIA

DINAMO ZAGREB and Hajduk Split, the country's two biggest clubs, both switched coaches within weeks of the season getting under way after making poor starts.

The situation was remarkable, even in a country where there are frequent coaching changes.

Nikola Jurcevic was fired by Dinamo after they took just six points from their first four games, with assistant Djuro Bago handed the reins. The club had invested heavily in new players during the summer, and their squad contains virtually the entire national Under-23 line-up. However, the string of mediocre results prompted executive vice-president Zdravko Mamic to order Jurcevic out less than a month into the campaign.

Mamic also laid into the players, saying some of them were just too poor to wear the Dinamo shirt. He then fined them £6,500 each after a 2-0 away defeat by Slovenians Primorje in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round, despite the fact Dinamo had won the first leg 4-0.

Hajduk's Ivan Katalinic lasted one more League round than Jurcevic, resigning after being refused permission to refresh his squad, despite them having taken just seven points from five games and lost 4-3 on aggregate to Irish side Shelbourne in the Champions League. Katalinic had named five players he wanted to discard, but the club stood by their decision that none should be offloaded, and Katalinic took his leave.

His replacement is Blaz Sliskovic, a former Hajduk great and the Bosnia-Herzegovina coach. Sliskovic, whose team won his first game in charge, 4-0 against Zadar, has insisted he is capable of doing both jobs at the same time.

Zlatko Kranjcar won his first game in charge of the Croatian national team, beating Israel 1-0 in a friendly in Varazdin.

Zdravko Reic

Starkovs takes Spartak helm

RUSSIA

LATVIAN NATIONAL TEAM coach Aleksandrs Starkovs has replaced Italian Nevio Scala at Moscow Spartak with two months left to play in the League. The 49-year-old, who came to prominence when surprisingly leading Latvia to Euro 2004, has signed a contract until the end of 2006 but will remain at the helm of his national squad until the end of the year. Ironically, Latvia are one of Russia's rivals in the World Cup qualifiers. Starkovs has also concurrently been in charge of Latvian champions Skonto Riga, but has now left that post.

Spartak parted company with Scala with the team in mid-table and having lost virtually all chance of climbing to take one of the European places.

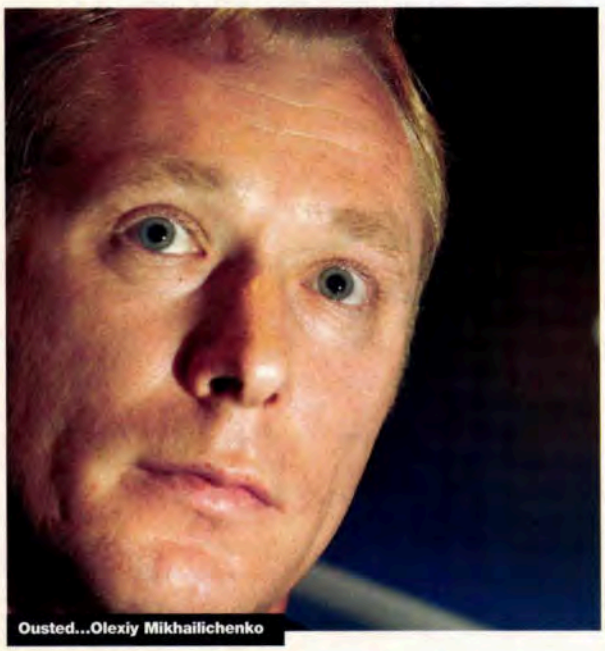
Starkovs has lived in Moscow before, when attending a coaches' school, and also played in the old USSR League, when with Dinamo Riga. With little left to play for in the current campaign, he is likely to concentrate on rebuilding the Spartak team. One major plus will be the return to action of playmaker Yegor Titov, whose one-year suspension for failing a drugs test ends in January.

On the field, Zenit St Petersburg have continued to lead the way in the League. Cup holders Terek Grozny have ensured their promotion to the top flight and also reached the UEFA Cup first round proper with a 2-0 aggregate win over Poland's Lech Poznan. The Chechen team are, in fact, made up mostly of Russians and play their League games outside the war-torn region.

Victor Gusev

Spartak challenge...Aleksandrs Starkovs

Mikhailichenko sacked, Szabo back



Ousted...Olexiy Mikhailichenko

UKRAINE

COACH OLEXIY MIKHAILICHENKO was sacked by reigning champions Kyiv Dynamo after a troubled start to the season. The side were totally outplayed by arch-rivals Shakhtar Donetsk during a 2-0 defeat on the first day of the League campaign, and Mikhailichenko then appeared to lose his authority in the dressing-room after a series of clashes with players. The final straw for club president Ihor Surkis was Dynamo's shock 2-1 home defeat by modest Turkish club Trabzonspor in the first leg of the Champions League third qualifying round.

Jozef Szabo, a vice-president at Dynamo, has now been handed the coaching role in a temporary capacity almost eight years after he last held the post. The 64-year-old made an immediate impact, overseeing Dynamo's 2-0 win in the return against Trabzonspor to secure a lucrative Champions League group place. Szabo created history by fielding 10 foreign players in his starting line-up (keeper Olexander Shovkovskyi was the only Ukrainian), but the move paid off.

Mikhailichenko had taken charge of the club in summer 2002 following the death of legendary coach Valerii Lobanovskyi and won the League in both seasons in charge, as well as the Cup in 2003. Yet despite these achievements, the 40-year-old was never considered a long-term head coach of the club, and the recent difficulties prompted the management to take action.

Shakhtar also made the Champions League group stage after beating Club Brugge 6-3 on aggregate. The victory mirrored their good form in the domestic League, which they led by five points from Dynamo after winning all their first six games.

Oleg Zadernovsky

BELARUS

BATE go top

BATE Borisov took over top spot in the League with 10 games to play after beating Dnepr Transmash 1-0 away, while previous leaders Dinamo Minsk were losing 2-0 at city rivals Torpedo. BATE's victory also meant they had scored in 32 consecutive League games, a club record.

The national team snatched a surprise 2-1 win away to Turkey in their August friendly, with Denis Kovba scoring the winner in the last minute.

Oleg Zadernovsky

CZECH REPUBLIC

Sparta scramble through

Sparta Prague reached the Champions League group phase again, despite a tricky qualifying campaign. Having beaten spirited Cypriot side APOEL in the second qualifying round, last season's League runners-up needed a scrambled extra-time winner from defender Jiri Homola to overcome Ferencvaros, 2-1 on aggregate, on a dramatic night in Prague. Sparta had lost the first leg 1-0.

Champions Banik Ostrava crashed to a 5-0 defeat against in-form Bayer Leverkusen in Germany, and a 2-1 win in the return was mere consolation. The club suffered a further blow when international striker Marek Heinz finally ended transfer speculation by signing with Borussia Monchengladbach.

Sigma Olomouc reached the UEFA Cup first round with a 6-1 aggregate victory over Moldova's Nistru Otaci. But debt-ridden Slavia Prague went out of the competition on away goals after a 3-3 draw with Georgia's Dinamo Tbilisi.

At home, Sparta's new-look team has clearly begun to gel after a patchy start. They went top of the table after thrashing Opava 5-1, having come from 2-0 down to beat newly-promoted Drnovice 3-2 the previous week.

Sam Beckwith

ROMANIA

Zenga zooms back

Walter Zenga, the former Italy keeper, has returned to Romania, to coach Steaua Bucharest, six months after he quit as boss of city rivals National.

Zenga took up his new post just three days before the season kicked off after surprisingly winning a poll of Steaua players 16-4 against former Romanian international Marius Lacatus, the other candidate for the job.

The Italian reportedly shouted in delight when told of his appointment on the phone while on holiday in Spain. However, the hard work started straight away on his return to Romania since Steaua faced three potential championship rivals – Rapid and Dinamo of Bucharest and Universitatea Craiova – in the first four games.

Steaua lost the first of these key clashes, 2-1 away to Rapid, but emerged a different side after 10 days on the training field to beat Dinamo 1-0 away next time out. They then thrashed Universitatea 5-0 at home to put their title credentials on the table.

Radu Timofte

BULGARIA

Petrov pays price early

Former Levski Sofia coach Stefan Grozdanov has taken the helm at Lokomotiv Sofia after the resignation of Yassen Petrov following a poor start to the season. Lokomotiv took only four points from their first four games, a tally reduced to just one because of the three-point deduction imposed by FIFA for non-payment of wages to Brazilian forward Alex Arruda.

Ivan Petrov was an even earlier coaching departure, leaving Spartak Varna three days before the season even kicked off. Petrov, who is succeeded by former Levski Sofia forward Petar Kurdov, was only appointed in June, meaning he did not take charge of a single competitive game. Kurdov was previously in charge of Botev Plovdiv and Belasitsa.

Rumen Stoyanov was another early departure, quitting Marek Dupnitsa after a 4-2 defeat by Lokomotiv in the second round of matches. Ex-Cherno More boss Velislav Vutsov is the new man in charge.

Lokomotiv Plovdiv were easily defeated in the Champions League, going out 6-0 on aggregate to Club Brugge in the second qualifying round. However, all three of Bulgaria's UEFA Cup representatives made it through to the first round proper – Levski Sofia and Litex Lovech both thumped their Bosnian opponents (Modrica 8-0 on aggregate and Zeljeznicar 9-1, respectively), while CSKA Sofia beat Omonia of Cyprus 4-2.

Michael Bowesfield

HUNGARY

Ferencvaros off to flier

Ferencvaros got off to a flying start in the defence of their League crown, winning all their first four games, including a 2-1 victory over fellow title contenders MTK. Midfielder Denes Rosa sealed his man-of-the-match performance by scoring the winner.

However, Ferencvaros narrowly missed out on qualification for the Champions League group stage, losing 2-1 on aggregate to Sparta Prague. The second leg went to extra-time with the overall score at 1-1, with the Czech side hitting the winner with just a few minutes to play in the additional period.

Ujpest beat Swiss side Servette home and away in the UEFA Cup second qualifying round, but Honved went out on penalties to Amica Wronki of Poland.

The national team shone in their August World Cup qualifying warm-up, beating Scotland 3-0 in Glasgow. Young midfielder Szabolcs Huszti hit two of the goals.

Peterjon Cresswell

SLOVAKIA

Dubnica surprise leaders

Unfancied Dubnica were top and unbeaten after the first five League rounds, and their four wins included the scalp of reigning champions and title favourites Zilina.

Zilina also lost in Europe, going down 2-0 on aggregate to Dinamo Bucharest in the Champions League. Artmedia Bratislava exited the UEFA Cup, losing 4-1 to Dnipro of Ukraine in the second qualifying round, to leave Banska Bystrica as the only Slovak side left in European competition. They beat Swiss side Wil 1900 4-2 in the UEFA Cup to clinch a first round clash with Benfica.

Dusan Galis recorded his first victory since taking over as national team coach at the end of last year as Slovakia beat Luxembourg 3-1 in their first World Cup qualifier.

Pavol Stracansky

Wisla face Real-ity

Potent striker...Maciej Zurawski

POLAND

WISLA KRAKOW'S DREAM of reaching the Champions League group stage was ended by Real Madrid, who won their third qualifying round meeting 5-1 on aggregate. But the domestic title holders have continued to show their dominance on the home front, winning all their first four League games and scoring 16 goals in the process, with only one conceded. Tomasz Frankowski and Maciej Zurawski are established as the country's most potent attacking partnership, though Wisla have lost out in midfield after Nigerian Kalu Uche joined Bordeaux on a one-year loan.

Legia Warsaw qualified for the first round of the UEFA Cup after a 7-0 aggregate victory over FC Tbilisi. The result helped ease the pressure on coach Dariusz Kubicki, whose side made an underwhelming start to the domestic season. There has also been trouble off the field at Legia, with supporters mounting protests against a hefty ticket price increase.

Amica Wronki also progressed in the UEFA Cup, beating Hungary's Honved 5-4 on penalties after a 1-1 draw, but Lech Poznan fell to Russia's Terek Grozny, 2-0.

The national team had a terrible World Cup warm-up encounter with Denmark, losing 5-1 in Poznan.

Dariusz Kurowski

Foot race...Racing Club's Leonardo Tambussi tries to escape Andres Guglielminpietro of Boca during the opening championship clash

All change, no change!

ARGENTINA

BOCA JUNIORS and River Plate led after four rounds of the opening championship but that was the only constant in Argentina's ever-changing football scene.

First, there were the coaching switches. Independiente went into the campaign rocked by the death of Jose Omar Pastoriza, who suffered a heart attack in early August. Among the 15 other clubs who were in the top division last year, only six started with the same coach as last season's closing championship and one of those, San Lorenzo's Nestor Gorosito, left after three games, fed up with the fans' continual sniping.

One of the new coaches, Rosario Central's Victor Pua, quit after just two games in charge because of a contract wrangle and lack of reinforcements to his squad.

Then there was the huge number of transfers – 190 players joined top division clubs during the close season – with Racing Club living up to their reputation as wheeler-dealers by bringing in a record 16. Most of those are loan deals because of the club's delicate financial situation, so it was a surprise that the team, now under 1978 World Cup-winning keeper Ubaldo Fillol, managed to win their first three games.

The run ended against Boca in their next match, however, with striker Martin Palermo, back at his old club after an unsuccessful spell with Villarreal in Spain, scoring both goals in Boca's 2-1 win.

Racing's neighbours, Independiente, also rang the changes, bringing in 10 players and shipping out 13. But it was the deal they didn't strike that made the biggest splash. The club believed they had landed midfielder Matias Almeyda on a free transfer from Internazionale. But before signing, Almeyda returned to Italy with his family, concerned about the current wave of kidnapping in Argentina. "I wanted to stay but the conditions were not right," he said. "For two months I had to have my family guarded by private police."

Palermo is one of a number of players back in Argentina after failing to make the grade in Europe. Striker Jose Flores is at Independiente, having been unable to gain a regular place at Spanish side Murcia, while Racing Club have Martin Cardetti, who failed to score at relegated Valladolid.

Then there is Ariel Ortega, who has not played for two years since he ran out on Fenerbahce. He has been registered by Newell's Old Boys, although he cannot play unless his new club can stump up £2million to free him from his contract with the Turkish side.

Newell's recently sold young international winger Mauro Rosales to Ajax for £2.2m, with which they planned to buy Ortega. But even if the deal goes through, shipping out Rosales – voted the League's outstanding newcomer last season – for a 30-year-old who has not played for so long does not seem good business.

Eric Weil

Chaos and cancellations

MEXICO

THE OPENING CHAMPIONSHIP started with the usual chaos when, despite many assurances that the programme would be strictly adhered to, some clubs were allowed to postpone games after claiming they would be handicapped by the absence of key players because of Olympic and World Cup commitments.

There were also some highly inconsistent performances. For instance, Monterrey, now coached by ex-Atlante boss Miguel Herrera, beat Veracruz 2-0, lost their derby against Tigres 6-2, and then came back with a 3-0 win against Cruz Azul.

The federation confirmed that national team coach Ricardo Lavolpe would continue in the post – for the time being, at least – despite poor performances in the Copa America (Mexico lost 4-0 to Brazil in the quarter-finals) and at the Olympics (the Under-23s went out after finishing only third in their group).

Mexico's participation in the Olympics led them to postpone their scheduled opening World Cup qualifier against St Kitts until November. The campaign was further disrupted when their next game, against St Vincent, was also put off when the Caribbean team were unable to fly to Mexico because of hurricanes.

Carlos Ramirez

Letdown...Mexico's Olympic hopes died in the group stage

Schmid orbits out of Galaxy

UNITED STATES

Top and out...Sigi Schmid

THIS WAS NOT exactly your usual coach-firing scenario. Halfway through August, only eight games left in the MLS regular season, and Los Angeles Galaxy were sitting on top of the Western Conference division, with the best record in the League.

An apparently satisfactory situation was suddenly blown apart when the club called a press conference to announce that they had ditched Sigi Schmid.

The coach expressed disappointment and surprise, while general manager Doug Hamilton admitted the move was controversial. "We're in first place, and we're saying that's not good enough," he said. "The fans deserve a more entertaining and attractive product on the field."

Even that seemed off-target because Galaxy were also the League's leading scorers with 35 goals in 24 games.

But Hamilton had previously let it be known the team should also be livelier, more fun to watch. Indeed, the firing of Schmid had more to do with events last season – in particular, a disastrous play-off defeat by San Jose Earthquakes. Galaxy, leading 2-0 from the first leg, travelled to San Jose and quickly scored twice more – only for Earthquakes to come roaring back with five goals to win.

At that time Schmid was widely rumoured to be on his way out. But Hamilton retained him, predicting that from now on, a new, attack-oriented Galaxy would be seen. Schmid has never been known as an attack-minded coach, yet his pre-season signings had the right look – Jovan Kirovski, the US international returning from a stint in Europe, and 34-year-old Austrian Andreas Herzog.

But would they combine with Carlos Ruiz, the League's leading goalscorer? They have not. Ruiz continues to score, but none of his 11 goals this term has been created by either Kirovski or Herzog.

At the time of Schmid's firing, Galaxy were struggling through a bleak stretch of four draws and one defeat. The last straw for Hamilton was evidently a tedious 0-0 home draw with Columbus Crew.

But another reason was the availability of a desirable alternative in Steve Sampson, who coached the USA during the 1998 World Cup and was recently fired as Costa Rica's national team boss.

Sampson has the major advantage of being fluent in Spanish. That is crucial since Los Angeles is home to a vast number of Hispanic-American fans.

Next season Galaxy will face stiff competition for those fans from the new Mexican-owned Chivas-USA, who will share Galaxy's Home Depot stadium.

Paul Gardner

ROUND-UP

URUGUAY

● The player strike over unpaid wages finally came to an end in late August, allowing the top division's classification stage to be completed after a two-month hiatus. Danubio, who had already made sure of first place before the strike started, finished the 17-match tournament unbeaten. They now go into the opening and closing championships, along with the next seven best finishers – Cerrito, Penarol, Nacional, Liverpool, Rentistas, Wanderers and Fenix – plus two play-off teams.

● New Nacional coach Hugo De Leon has been barred from sitting on the bench during matches since, according to the Uruguayan Association of Coaches, he does not have the appropriate certification.

COLOMBIA

● Millonarios, founder members of the country's professional League in the 1950s, are bankrupt and facing expulsion from the League unless they agree to go into administration. The club, bottom of the closing championship at the end of August, have debts of £2million.

Tolima led the way at the top of the table, while Libertadores Cup winners Once Caldas were only mid-table. The latter recently lost 2-1 to Deportivo Pereira when fielding reserves while the first team were playing a friendly against the Honduras national side in Miami.

PERU

● Alianza Lima, the overall 2003 champions, won this year's opening title with a game to spare when beating Universitario 1-0 in Lima's classic derby.

Eric Weil

Here is the news...AFC president Mohamed Bin Hammam unveils the confederation's plans

Four co-hosts for Asian Cup

AFTER LAYING CLAIM to the first-ever co-hosted World Cup in 2002, when Japan and South Korea shared the event, Asia has gone multi-hosting mad with the announcement that the rights for the 2008 Asian Cup will be shared by an unprecedented four nations. The South-east Asian quartet of Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia will jointly stage the 16-team tournament in a bold move by the Asian Football Confederation.

"Asia is a very huge continent and every national association would like to take part in hosting AFC competitions," said confederation president Mohamed Bin Hammam, who actively encouraged the plan at the meeting of the AFC's executive committee that endorsed it. "The Asian Cup is the biggest competition we have, and every country is interested in being the host. By allowing more than one country to have the honour of hosting this competition we are giving the chance to every national association to host the Asian Cup."

Whether regional differences can be set aside to make the event work remains to be seen, but in theory the plan is more than workable. Transportation links between all four nations are strong and each of the probable venue cities has stadiums capable of hosting a tournament of that stature.

Although the host cities have yet to be confirmed, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur and Jakarta are all expected to host one group and one quarter-final each. The Vietnamese will decide whether Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City will take their quota of games, although with Hanoi holding the nation's political power base, it would appear to be the most likely choice, especially since it hosted the most recent South-east Asian Games.

"After the inspection visits we will be able to decide which countries will be best to host the Final and the opening ceremony," said Hammam. "After the huge success of [this year's] Asian Cup in China, we have to be very careful about the future of our confederation and we have to find the best countries to host the finals."

Kuala Lumpur could be key

While no official decision had been made at the time of the announcement, Kuala Lumpur was being touted as the early favourite to operate as the tournament's anchor venue. The city is home of the AFC and the ASEAN football federation – the South-east Asian regional body which proposed the joint bid to the confederation – and also boasts the impressive Bukit Jalil stadium, built to host the 1998 Commonwealth Games.

All four nations will qualify automatically for the championship but defending champions Japan will not after the confederation decided to axe this perk.

Despite problems on and off the pitch, China 2004 was deemed a huge success. Japan's 3-1 win over China in the Final broke Chinese television viewing records, surpassing the 2002 World Cup Final to become the most-watched single sports event in the history of Chinese TV. The game was seen by 43.1 per cent of people watching TV in China at peak time – a figure of over 250 million – as the host nation reached the Final of the tournament for the first time in 20 years.

Meanwhile, the AFC has renewed its links with the African confederation after a four-year breakdown in relations. The Africans broke off contact with Asia in protest at the decision by the confederation's four members of the FIFA executive committee to vote for Germany rather than South Africa in the vote for 2006 World Cup hosting rights.

The rapprochement includes a revival of the Afro-Asian Nations Cup, a meeting between Asian champions Japan and African champions Tunisia over two legs. In addition, Al Ain, winners of last year's Asian Champions League, will play their African counterparts, Enyimba of Nigeria.

The AFC executive committee also confirmed plans to launch a new club competition, the AFC President's Cup, to include teams from nations that fall into the confederation's lowest tier.

Michael Church

TV hit...the 2004 Asian Cup

Pohang back at the top

SOUTH KOREA

POHANG STEELERS HAVE returned to the top of South Korean football by lifting the K-League's First Stage title. The club, who had not won a championship since 1992, when known as POSCO Atoms, finished three points clear of Chonbuk Motors in the 12-game campaign.

The triumph also gives Pohang entry to the overall championship Final, against the winners of the Second Stage.

A 1-1 draw with Gwangju Sangmu gave Choi Soon-ho's side victory as defending champions Songnam Ilhwa struggled, finishing back in eighth place after a poor start.

Songnam, winners of the last three League titles, went some way towards making amends by lifting the Hauzen Cup, finishing two points ahead of Daejeon Citizen.

The victory came after a clear-out of the club's three South Americans. Colombia's Harry Castillo and Brazilians Adhemar and Ireneu were released, and replaced by former Russian international defender Andrei Solomatin and Brazilian duo Marcelo Macedo and Dudu.

Elsewhere, Busan I.cons have signed promising Australian Ahmad Elrich from Parramatta Power.

Incheon United's difficult first season in the K-League went from bad to worse following the resignation of German coach Werner Lorant, who left the bottom-placed club due to his wife's ill health.

South Korean World Cup star Lee Chun-soo has joined Numancia on loan from Real Sociedad after a disappointing first year in Spain. Meanwhile, fellow international Seol Ki-hyeun has left Anderlecht to join Wolverhampton in England.

Michael Church

I.Conic image...Ahmad Elrich has moved to Busan

ROUND-UP

New role...Peter Withe

- Former Thailand coach Peter Withe has taken charge of the INDONESIAN national team after the contract of Bulgarian Ivan Kolev expired. Withe, who guided the Thais to two Tiger Cup triumphs, has been working with Indonesia's Under-20s since March this year.

- Former Newcastle striker Mirandinha has been fired by MALAYSIAN side Kedah after the club's relegation from the eight-team Super League. Pahang won the inaugural championship, beating Telekom Melaka 3-2 to clinch the title.

- UNITED ARAB EMIRATES side Al Ahli have renewed the contract of experienced Romanian coach Ilie Balacci, a veteran of the Gulf scene who has worked with Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal and reigning UAE champions Al Ain.

- The VIETNAM FA has suspended six footballers who were arrested on suspicion of match-fixing in the professional V-League.

- In SINGAPORE, Tampines Rovers seemed certain to win the League, needing three points from their final two matches to make sure. Meanwhile, Nigeria-born forward Itimi Dickson is now eligible to play for the national team after receiving citizenship. The player was inducted into the Singaporean FA's Foreign Talent Scheme two years ago.

- In INDIA, Tollygunge Agragami booked the final Super Six berth of the Super Division Calcutta League. The other qualifiers are East Bengal, Mohun Bagan, Mohammedan Sporting, Ever-Ready Association and George Telegraph.

Michael Church & Azam Mahmood

Reds spell danger

JAPAN

Tight call...Marinos narrowly beat Shimizu S-Pulse

GUIDO BUCHWALD'S Urawa Reds made a sparkling start to the J.League's Second Stage, winning their first three games and scoring 13 goals in the process.

The German coach, who took the reins at the start of this year, promised aggressive, attacking football in the new stage and has been more than true to his word. Reds' start was all the more impressive given the absence of key players Tatsuya Tanaka and Tulio Tanaka for the first two matches because of Olympic commitments.

The downside of Buchwald's attacking style is that Reds conceded two goals in each game, despite the arrival of Turkey defender Alpay Ozalan. To tighten up the defence, Buchwald is bringing in Brazilian Nene from Sao Paulo.

Gamba Osaka were the only other side to win their first three matches. However, they are set to lose international midfielder Junichi Inamoto, who has agreed to return to England, this time with West Bromwich. Olympic midfielder Daisuke Matsui is also moving to Europe, on loan to Le Mans in France from Kyoto Purple Sanga.

First Stage winners Yokohama F Marinos started with narrow wins over Shimizu S-Pulse and Oita Trinita before losing to a much-improved Nagoya Grampus Eight. The latter's new Brazilian signing, Claiton from Santos, has enlivened midfield and already found the net twice. Grampus lost their opener to Gamba, but then won impressively at Jubilo Iwata before their victory over Marinos.

Mike Plastow & Yumiko Nagae

Grand Central

OCEANIA

Englishman Allan Jones is the toast of Auckland soccer after guiding Central United to NEW ZEALAND'S Northern Premier League title. The club finished 10 points ahead of closest challengers Bay Olympic in what is generally regarded as the strongest of the country's regional competitions.

The other major regional league winners were Nelson Suburbs (Mainland), Caversham (Otago – Southland) and Napier City Rovers (Central Federation).

Rewa retained FIJI'S Battle of the Giants tournament trophy when defeating Nadi 2-0 in the Final at their own Ratu Cakobau Park. Sakeo Valevou scored the goals, both in the second half, and the Delta Tigers dominated throughout.

The Final, originally scheduled to be hosted by Ba, was switched to Rewa after the Blacks' shock preliminary round elimination at the hands of humble Navua.

Paul Moon

Welcome Bora and De Boers

QATAR

FORMER CHINA, Mexico and USA boss Bora Milutinovic has become the latest foreigner to be enticed to Qatar with his appointment as head coach of League champions Al Sadd.

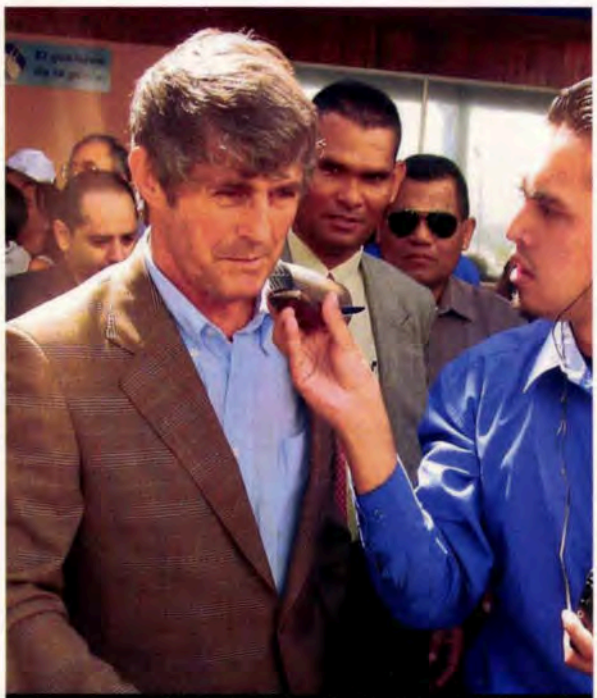
The 60-year-old Serb, famed for coaching five different nations at the World Cup, signed a one-year contract to replace Croatian Luka Peruzovic just weeks after resigning from his position as head coach of the Honduras national team.

Milutinovic joins former Senegal coach Bruno Metsu in the Gulf state, the Frenchman having accepted a contract with Al Ittihad after negotiations to take charge of the South Korean national team fell through.

Metsu has a high reputation in the Arab world after leading United Arab Emirates side Al Ain to victory in the Asian Champions League. Both he and Milutinovic are already being touted as future candidates to lead the Qatari national team. For now, Bosnian coach Dzemaluddin Musovic has taken that position following the sacking of Frenchman Philippe Troussier during the Asian Cup.

Qatari clubs, meanwhile, have continued to hoover up foreign talent. Dutch twins Ronald and Frank De Boer have signed with Al Rayyan, while two of the Bahrain squad that reached the Asian Cup semi-finals are now in Qatar – Ala'a Hubail has signed for Al Ittihad while Mohammed Salmeen has joined Al Arabi.

Michael Church


First words...new Al Sadd coach Bora Milutinovic speaks to the media

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Revelation...teenager Fabregas has made a big impact at Highbury

Here comes new Armada

Fabregas's impact could well spark a rush of Spanish imports. Keir Radnedge reports

IN SPAIN HE is known by the nickname of Cesc. In England he is known by his formal family name of Fabregas. But the player is the same and is proving that it is not only Frenchmen who flourish under the management of Arsene Wenger at Arsenal.

Indeed, Francesc Fabregas Soler – his full name – represents a new era in Premiership football. Never mind Englishmen lured to the Bernabeu. The traffic is heading largely in the other direction. What Spain's Philip II could not manage in 1588 is being attempted, 416 years later, by a small armada of footballers.

Of course Fabregas was preceded at Highbury earlier this year by Jose Antonio Reyes. But back in the spring the former Sevilla striker was an exception rather than a rule. A number of Spaniards had made a low-profile impact further down, in the Football League. But few, with the possible exceptions of Gaizka Mendieta at Middlesbrough and Ivan Campo at Bolton, had impacted in the Premiership.

Suddenly the view from the top is different. Fernando Hierro has joined his old Real Madrid partner Campo at the Reebok stadium, and Liverpool have not only signed a Spanish coach in Rafa Benitez but also four Spanish players – Josemi, Antonio Nunez, Luis Garcia and Xabi Alonso.

For most English fans Fabregas was a revelatory newcomer when appearing for champions Arsenal as they beat Manchester United 3-1 in the FA Community Shield and then opened their Premiership defence by winning 4-1 at Everton – when he became the club's youngest League debutant.

Arsenal's youngest player

Born on May 4, 1987, Fabregas became Arsenal's youngest player in a competitive match when he turned out in the League Cup against Rotherham last October aged 16 years 177 days. Then he became the youngest Arsenal goalscorer at 16 years 212 days in a 5-1 win over Wolves in December.

For Spanish fans, however, his prowess was no surprise nor assessments that, when he has gained in muscle strength, Arsenal need not worry about paying big money for a playmaking successor to Patrick Vieira.

Manager Arsene Wenger said: "Age is not so important nowadays with modern fitness systems. If you have football intelligence and technique that is enough. Fabregas is mentally very hungry but he is still a young boy physically so we'll have to

protect him. However, the more opponents try to intimidate him the more he comes back and the better he plays. He is good enough to be a regular player in our team already.

"Management is all about finding a balance. I want to open the door to the young talent we have at the club, like Fabregas."

That balance theme was picked up by Benitez, justifying his Spanish player swoop. He said: "They will be important because they give us more technical and tactical possibilities and more of the qualities we need. Xabi is a proven international, while Luis Garcia only missed out on playing for Spain because he was injured. Xabi can hit short or long passes equally well and dominate midfield, while Luis is a talented attacking player who played for me as a left-sided midfielder at Tenerife and scored 16 goals.

"When you have more players it is more competitive and that is better for all the players and the team in the long run. I like midfielders to provide goals. In Luis, Steven Gerrard, Harry Kewell and Xabi we'll have players who can score five or more goals each, giving us more possibilities in attack."

Benitez attempted to sign Garcia, 26, while at Valencia but is now hoping to offer some stability to a player who has spent the past six seasons at different clubs, either on loan or after permanent transfers. He has not only played in La Liga for Atletico Madrid and Valladolid but also was Barcelona's leading scorer in pre-season. "I'm sad we lost him," says Barcelona coach Frank Rijkaard, "but in the end there was nothing more to do but congratulate him on the value of his new contract."

Barcelona were more upset, however, at the manner of Fabregas's departure a year ago. Arsenal's swoop infuriated

'The chance to play in the Premiership was too attractive'

Francesc Fabregas

Barca just as the Gunners had once upset Paris Saint-Germain by snatching then apprentice Nicolas Anelka.

Wenger's personal scouting network – Francisco Cagigao in Spain, for example – spots teenage talent on the continent, and if there is also a contract loophole so much the better.

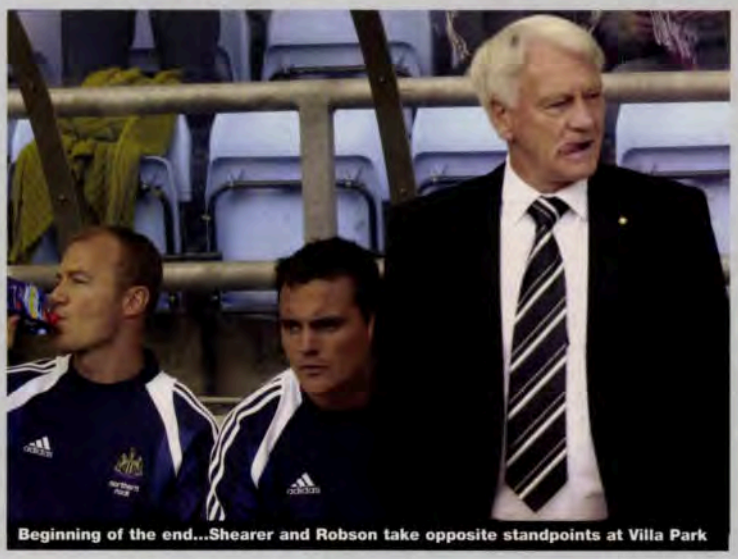
Wenger knew all about Fabregas even before he became both five-goal top scorer and best player when Spain finished runners-up at last year's World Under-17 Championship in Finland. It was the first time a player had taken both awards in a FIFA championship. Months earlier he had helped Barca's senior youth team win the triple crown of league, regional and national titles.

That was when Arsenal stepped in. Fabregas's father says: "It was a difficult decision. We weighed up the pros and cons and decided Arsenal was a better prospect than staying at Barcelona."

Fabregas, denying Spanish media accusations that he chose Arsenal for the money, said: "I owe Barcelona a great deal for everything I learned there but the chance to play in the Premiership, learn another language and another culture was too attractive."

One Spanish newspaper said: "He is Schuster, Guardiola, Xavi and Arteta rolled into one and with the potential to be a new Zidane." If even a fraction of that assessment proves true, expect many more Spanish imports to wash up on Premiership shores.

MEDIAWATCH



Beginning of the end...Shearer and Robson take opposite standpoints at Villa Park

The Bobby Robson saga

"BOBBY HAS ANOTHER 12 months left on his contract and everyone knows it. That's a fact. You don't sack Sir Bobby Robson." So said Newcastle chairman Freddie Shepherd in May.

Not until you're four games into a new season, anyway. Robson's love affair with his hometown club came to a bitter end on August 30 when Shepherd pulled the plug on the 71-year-old's five-year tenure following a 4-2 defeat at Aston Villa.

"I'm trying not to panic, and I will use all my experience and expertise to turn this ship around," said Robson to the BBC after the game. "We have problems, but we have potentially another 56 games to go, and with the players we have, we will get back on song." It was soon, however, out of his hands.

The Times, too, had no inkling the writing was on the wall. On the day Robson was sacked it trumpeted: "There was no sense yesterday that plonking [Alan] Shearer on the substitutes' bench would do for Robson as it did for Ruud Gullit five years ago." *The Mirror*, however, summed the reality up both more accurately and succinctly with the headline 'Knight Of The Long Knives'.

Immediately Robson's dismissal became public knowledge, keyboards slammed into life unleashing a torrent of comment from the great and the good. The *Sunday Times*' Hugh McIlvanney laid the blame firmly at the door of the chairman. "Shepherd has been presiding over a football club in lamentable disarray, and it would be unjust to deny him a substantial share of the credit for the dishevelment," he wrote, with creditable black humour.

In the *Daily Telegraph*, former player Alan Hansen laid the blame squarely at the feet of the players at the forefront of acknowledged dressing-room unrest. "It is an indictment of the way that modern football has developed," he declared, "that [Kieron] Dyer's determination to defy his manager and not play on the right side of midfield – and [Craig] Bellamy's pledge to leave if Newcastle signed Wayne Rooney – have contributed to close down the career of a great manager."

But the overall feeling was simply that the sands of time had probably finally run out for Robson. In *The Observer*, Paul Wilson was brutal but honest. "Not even Robson's most devoted admirers would argue he has been outstandingly successful at Newcastle. Since the high of the 2001-02 season and the heady run in Europe that followed, the club have been going backwards."

Even former England manager Graham Taylor, in the *Daily Telegraph*, felt the time was right. "You might just as well be out of it now Bobby, but who am I to say? But there are other things in life, believe me."

New Toon manager Graeme Souness does not seem to believe that. Not even serious heart surgery has kept him out of the dugout and his arrival on Tyneside will yet again spark the typical optimism without foundation that is Newcastle's trademark.

"Newcastle are one of the best-supported clubs around," he told the BBC. "Everything is there to be successful and I just hope I'm the man to bring it to them."

Where have we heard that one before?

Howard Johnson

Woody for England?

Can Sir Clive Woodward cut it in football? Howard Johnson speculates

JUST WHEN YOU thought football couldn't get any crazier, along comes Sir Clive Woodward. The abrasive, World Cup-winning head coach of the England rugby team certainly likes to make people sit up and take notice. Mainly by butting heads.

His mostly triumphant time with England was littered with spats, fall-outs and minor altercations with anyone and everyone, from the supposedly unhelpful coaches of the league clubs to 'off message' members of the press. The man is a spiky individual.

But starting September by handing in his resignation amid an absolute avalanche of rumours that he was about to take a high level appointment as director of football at Southampton has lifted his profile into a whole new dimension.

Crossing the divide?...Woodward

If the assertions are true and Woodward really is going to team up with his long-standing buddy Rupert Lowe, the Southampton chairman, then you have to hand it to the coach – he's got balls.

Nothing will happen in the near future, though. Woodward already has a firm commitment to coach the British Lions in New Zealand next summer. But he has confirmed a definite interest in moving from oval to round ball and looks set fair to have a crack at it when the timing is right.

A rugby coach suddenly landing a high profile job in the ultra-competitive world of Premiership football? It sounds so preposterous as to be dismissed out of hand. Yet it's a mark of the esteem in which Woodward is held, plus an indication of his overwhelming confidence-come-arrogance, that no one is doubting the notion.

But could Woodward really do it? And make a success of it? If he does it will make a mockery of every popularly-held belief in football management. That top-level tactical nous only comes with vast experience. That you have to have lived and breathed the game and worked your way up every rung of the business to stand any chance of understanding how to run a football club's playing side successfully.

Woodward will no doubt say that's rubbish. That the same principles which held him in such good stead in international rugby – hard work, serious investment, meticulous preparation, endless motivational ideas – can reap spectacular rewards in any sport.

He could have a point, too. Within rugby circles Woodward was admired for all of the above far more than for his tactical coaching skills. He had the hard-nosed pragmatist Andy Robinson as his No 2 for all that stuff. Maybe a tracksuited second in command working on the pitch with the players every day could produce the same results in football.

Earning respect

The stumbling blocks Woodward would face lie elsewhere. Would he have the respect of cynical players as an undeniable Johnny Come Lately? More importantly, would his intellectual approach cut any ice with football's predominantly less mentally agile players?

In rugby, Woodward dealt mainly with grammar and public schoolboys, lads possessed of plenty of grey matter with which to understand and assimilate their coach's intelligent schemes and visions.

In football, where you're lucky to get half a dozen GCSEs in an entire squad, will this thinking man's approach work? It can be argued that it already has for Arsene Wenger. But Wenger is also a smoother of ruffled egos, a wily French diplomat. Woodward is 'my way or the highway'. When your charges are on £60,000 a week that disciplinarian approach tends not to cut all that much ice.

Maybe Woodward is canny enough to change but we must wait and see. He is cleverly playing his cards very close to his chest, saying: "You have to start at the bottom and I intend to do that."

But sitting at the bottom of the pile just isn't Woodward's style. He will already have set himself much higher goals. He won't admit it, but he will already be visualising a future where he eventually coaches the England football team to matching World Cup glory and so goes down as the greatest sports coach of all time by a considerable distance.

Pie in the sky? Maybe. But in contrast to Sven Goran Eriksson's £4million-a-year deal, Woodward was paid a paltry £250,000 by rugby's ruling body. Maybe Woody for England isn't so crazy after all.

IT'S ALL GONE WRONG FOR...

DAVID JAMES

You'd have thought that once he'd given up that ridiculous white afro England keeper David James could finally stop acting the clown. But not a bit of it. First he makes the kind of error schoolboys would be shame-faced to own up to to allow Austria a 2-2 draw in England's first World Cup qualifier. Then he finds out his estranged wife Tanya has just hired the legal team that secured such a favourable divorce settlement for Ray Parlour's ex. Calamity James might be forced to stump up as much as £3million. And now the girl he left home for, former schoolchum Amanda Salmon, whom he met on the Friends Reunited website, has left him in the lurch. Could anything worse possibly happen to James? Well, he's got to spend the whole season behind the Manchester City defence...

Oh, Calamity...James is beaten in Austria

IT'S ALL GONE RIGHT FOR...

ARSENE WENGER

It looked for all the world that Arsenal skipper Patrick Vieira was finally off to Real Madrid. And while we're not buying that "my heart's in Arsenal" rubbish and suspect tricky contract negotiations rather than emotional ties prompted the Frenchman's last-minute about turn, the whole scenario yet again proved Arsene Wenger is not only a great manager but also a lucky one. Out on the pitch, too, the Gunners looked smooth as silk in the opening month. Maximum League points and an average of four goals a game tells its own superb story. Is there nothing this man cannot do? Well, win the Champions League so far. But who in their right mind would bet against him the way things are going right now?

Thumbs up...Wenger and Arsenal are in clover

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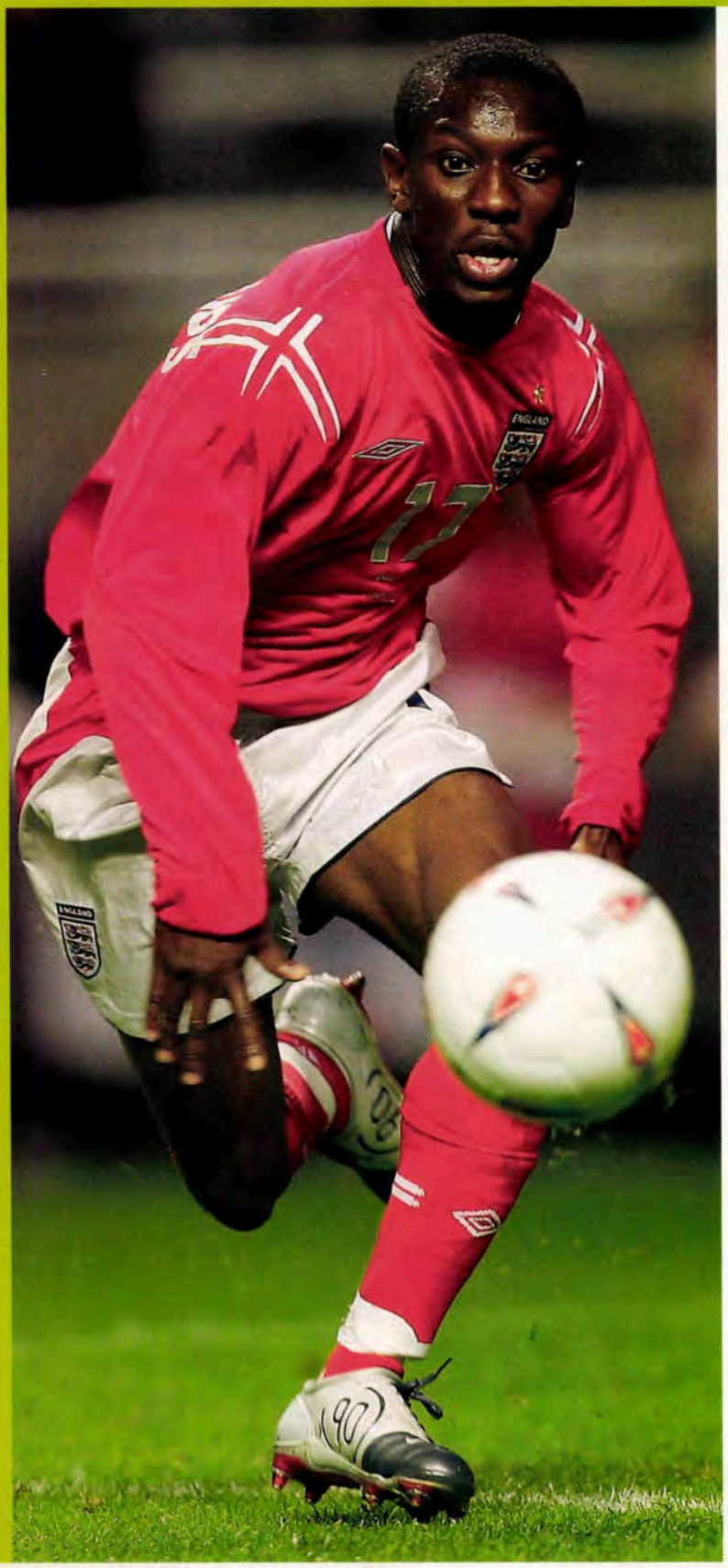

A rival for Beckham on England's right flank

ENGLAND'S chronic lack of wide players and David Beckham's current dip in form surely means the country can't afford to ignore the claims of 22-year-old Manchester City winger Shaun Wright-Phillips any longer.

Despite his size disadvantage – he stands just 5ft 6in – City manager Kevin Keegan has never wavered in his belief in the adopted son of former Arsenal striker Ian Wright.

Not long after his arrival at the club in 2001, Keegan was referring to Wright-Phillips as his surrogate son and predicting big things for the boy used as a bit-part player by former manager Joe Royle. Since then Wright-Phillips has done everything to back up his manager's claims.

Each season he has improved an aspect of what was already a decent all-round game for someone of his age and experience. His workrate was never in doubt. But first he worked on his positional sense, then his goalscoring contribution (11 for City last season) and now his crossing, which could and should be the key to getting him into the England side on a regular basis.

"His crossing has improved 500 per cent," says Keegan. "It was always OK, but it was erratic. Shaun would get into good positions, but then he would snatch at it and get over-excited. Now he's getting his head down, and when you put crosses in like he's doing at the moment with that sort of pace, then you don't have to do too much."

Wright-Phillips was a fixture in the England Under-21s last season and Sven Goran Eriksson included him in the senior team squad for the friendly against Sweden in March. But Eriksson resisted calls to give Wright-Phillips his senior debut ahead of Euro 2004.

The youngster had to wait until the start of this season, and a friendly against Ukraine in Newcastle, before finally being given his chance. He responded in explosive fashion, scoring a wonderful goal after a run from his own half.

A long England career awaits, predicts Keegan. "He will play for England again this season. There's nothing that can stop him. He's got everything, and England need a player like him."

And the player himself? Obviously Keegan's confidence has rubbed off on him too. "I love to hear the City fans chant my name," says Wright-Phillips. "And one day the England fans will be doing that. I will get to that point, don't worry about that."

Howard Johnson

FACT FILE

Club **Manchester City**
Country **England**
Born **October 25, 1981, in London**
International debut **August 2004, v Ukraine**
International caps **1 (1 goal)**

Badr EL KADDOURI

Moroccan winger making his mark in Ukraine

MOROCCO TO UKRAINE is not the usual route to football fame and fortune, but for Badr El Kaddouri it has proved to be highly successful. Two seasons ago, El Kaddouri signed a contract with Kyiv Dynamo, his career took off, and now he is one of the most effective wingers in the Ukrainian League.

El Kaddouri had been spotted as a teenager by Ukrainian coach Yuri Sevastianov, who was in charge of WAC Casablanca, where El Kaddouri had been on the books as a schoolboy, coming through the youth ranks.

"My father was a player and he decided I was best developing my football skills at WAC," says El Kaddouri. But he soon discovered the realities of life as a top player. "Morocco is hailed in Africa as the Arabian Brazil. It's true that the players are very skilful. But it's also true that the same footballers face serious financial problems. The clubs very often do not fulfil their contractual obligations and fail to pay on time."

Yet El Kaddouri met the challenges head-on and made such an impact for the first team that after playing only 38 matches in the Moroccan League, Kyiv Dynamo came calling. By signing him Dynamo were taking a gamble. Few at the club have forgotten Kuwaiti forward Al Sauhi, who was recommended by Valerii Lobanovskyi in 1995, but who survived only 10 minutes in a Dynamo shirt.

But in contrast, El Kaddouri knuckled down and worked hard at his new club. "I think it is impossible to become a real pro in one day," he says. "A player must develop his skills to the last day of his career."

El Kaddouri's time came last season when he deservedly occupied Dynamo's left flank for the whole campaign, impressed fans and opponents alike with his tireless raiding. "The trick is very simple," he says. "I work hard in training and, more importantly, I became more mature from a tactical point of view."

El Kaddouri's speed and vision have added a new dimension to the attack, but he is also a strong battler in midfield. His real value to Dynamo became apparent on his return to the squad after the Athens Olympics. Away to Trabzonspor in the Champions League third qualifying round, the Turkish players found an obstacle at both ends of the pitch in El Kaddouri, who defended, attacked and created chances in equal measure. His efforts were vital as Dynamo reached the group stage.

The 23-year-old now has every chance to emulate his heroes, fellow countryman and defender Noureddine Naybet and Roberto Carlos, who have graced the Champions League with Deportivo La Coruna and Real Madrid respectively. Through his hard work and talent, El Kaddouri can make his own impact against Europe's elite.

Oleg Zadernovsky

FACT FILE

Club Kyiv Dynamo (Ukr)
Country Morocco
Born January 31, 1981
Previous club WAC Casablanca
Honours Ukrainian League 2004; Ukrainian Supercup 2004

Javier MASCHERANO

River Plate's 20-year-old midfielder who has already struck gold for Argentina

JAVIER MASCHERANO, Argentina's latest young star, has just turned 20 but he has already had a long international career. The River Plate midfielder has appeared for Argentina's Under-17, Under-20 and Under-23 teams – he recently won gold with the latter at the Olympics – and also put in some outstanding performances for the senior side at the Copa America earlier this summer.

"Javier plays with the experience of a 30-year-old," says national junior teams coach Hugo Tocalli, while Leo Astrada, Mascherano's coach at River, pointed the youngster out as his successor when he retired as club captain last year before taking the coaching reins. "He has enormous potential," said Astrada. "He has not yet reached his best form, but he is better than me."

The midfielder's excellent form for River Plate's youth teams and then reserves prompted senior national team coach Marcelo Bielsa to select him as part of the 'sparring' side to help his own team during the 2002 World Cup finals. Mascherano's rapid rise to fame continued when at 19, he played in the Under-20 South American Championship, which Argentina won, and later that year in the World Youth Cup in the United Arab Emirates.

By then Mascherano was a vital cog in River's midfield, into which he had forced himself despite the club already having Marcelo Gallardo, Luis Gonzalez, Claudio Husain and Daniel Montenegro to choose from.

Not surprisingly, Mascherano is now the target for several big European clubs. And there is little doubt that River Plate, who continue to sell their best players, will let him go eventually.

Whichever club gets him will have a natural leader – he has already captained national junior teams – organiser and a player who has an unerring knack of appearing wherever the opposition threaten to resolve the problem.

Eric Weil

FACT FILE

Club River Plate
Country Argentina
Born June 8, 1984, in San Lorenzo
International debut July 2003, v Uruguay
International caps 8 (0 goals)
Honours Olympic football tournament 2004; Under-20 South American Championship 2003; Argentinian closing championship 2003, 2004

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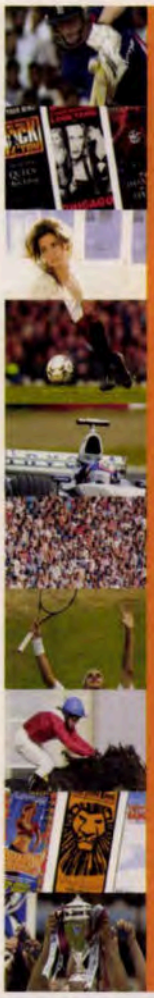

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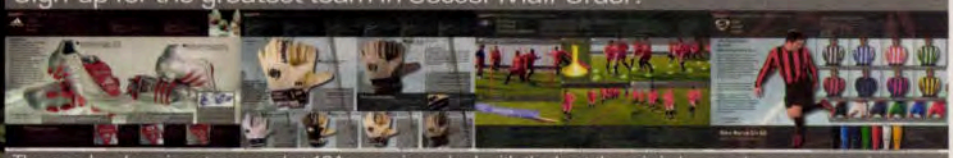

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INTERNATIONALS

Saturday, August 14

Aug 14 - Kampala - friendly
Uganda 1 (Sebalata)
Rwanda 2 (Mulisa, Karekezi)

Tuesday, August 17

Aug 17 - Algiers - friendly
Algeria 2 (Tahraoui 33, Arrache 54)
Burkina Faso 2 (Zongo pen 50, H Ouedraogo 67)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Tahri (Mor)
Algeria: Gaouaoui - Raho (Brahami 46), Beloufa, Laifaoui, Zazou (Hamlaoui 46), Achiou (S Daoud 46), Mamouni, Ghazi (Belkaid 46), B Daoud (Badache 79), Tahraoui (Arrache 46), Bougueche.
Burkina Faso: Coulibaly - Kere, Nogo, Tassembedo, Ouattara, Sanou, Rouamba (Nikiema 59), Soulama (Kabore 46), H Ouedraogo, Zongo, Balima.

Wednesday, August 18

Aug 18 - Vienna - friendly
Austria 1 (Amerhauser 10)
Germany 3 (Kuranyi 2, 61, 73)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 37,900. **Ref:** Collina (Ita)
Austria: Mandl - Stranzl, Ehmann, Hiden, Katzer, Schopp (Kirchler 46), Kuhbauer, Aufhauser, Ivanschitz, Kollmann (Wallner 70), Amerhauser (Linz 62).
Germany: Kahn (Lehmann 46) - Hinkel (Huth 86), Fahrenhorst, Linke, Lahm, Borowski, Frings (Baumann 86), Schweinsteiger (Ernst 62), Ballack, Asamoah (Podolski 78), Kuranyi (Brdaric 78).

Aug 18 - Varazdin - friendly
Croatia 1 (Simunic 29)
Israel 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Granat (Pol)
Croatia: Butina (Pletikosa 46) - Simunic, R Kovac (Vranjes 46), Tudor, Babic (I Leko 60), Srna, J Leko (Safaric 77), Kranjcar (Banovic 60), N Kovac, Klasnic, Mornar (Balaban 60).
Israel: Davidovich - Gazal (Suan 81), Ben-Haim, Gershon, Benado, Tal (Nimni 65), Badir, Antebi (Keisi 70), Afek, Balili (Golan 65), Benayoun (Uzan 81).

Aug 18 - Limassol - friendly
Cyprus 2 (M Constantinou pen 13, 48)
Albania 1 (Rraklli 64)
HT: 1-0
Cyprus: Morfis (N Panayiotou 46) - S Georgiou (Yarpozis 72), E Charalambous, Andoniou, Iakovou, Kaiafas (Satsias 46), Yiasoumi (Elis 46), Okkaridis, Charalambidis (C Michael 55), Makrides, M Constantinou (Themistocleous 82).
Albania: Strakosha (Lika 46) - E Beqiri, Noreka, Murati (Dragusha 46), Aliaj, Lala, A Beqiri, K Duro (Muka 57), Skela, Bushi, Myrtaj (Kapllani 46). *Sent off: Lala 90min.*

Aug 18 - Prague - friendly
Czech Republic 0
Greece 0
Att: 15,050. **Ref:** Dougal (Sco)
Czech Republic: Cech - Grygera, Tyce (Hubschman 73), Rozehnal, Bolf, Jankulovski (Mares 62), Galasek (Vachousek 46), Poborsky (Sionko 43), Rosicky, Heinz (Baros 46), Koller (Lokvenc 46).
Greece: Nikopolidis - Seitaridis, Kapsis (Kafes 46), Katsouranis, Fissas, Basinas, Zagorakis (Dabizas 46), Karagounis (Tsiartas 46), Giannakopoulos (Goumas 62), Vryzas (Venetidis 78), Haristeas.

Aug 18 - Paris - friendly
DR Congo 0
Mali 3 (Keita 2, 21, Kanoute 81)
HT: 0-2

Aug 18 - Newcastle - friendly
England 3 (Beckham 27, Owen 50, Wright-Phillips 72)
Ukraine 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 35,387. **Ref:** McCurry (Sco)
England: James - G Neville (Johnson 46), Terry, King, A Cole (Carragher 60), Butt (Wright-Phillips 52), Beckham, Lampard (Jenas 75), Gerrard (Dyer 46), Smith (Defoe 46), Owen.
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Rusol, Fedorov, Yeserskyi, Vorobei, Tymoshchuk, Shelaiev, Nesmachnyi (Radchenko 61), Husiev (Kormiltsev 61), Rotan (Zakarlyuka 64), Shevchenko (Voronin 52).

Aug 18 - Toftir - friendly
Faroe Islands 3 (a Borg 20, John Petersen 35, Benjaminsen 77)
Malta 2 (Giglio 50, Michael Mifsud 65)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 1,932. **Ref:** Laursen (Den)
Faroe Islands: Knudsen - Olsen, Thorsteinsson (J B Hansen 63), Jon R Jacobsen, Rogvi Jacobsen, Benjaminsen, J Johnsson, a Borg (Frederiksberg 63), John Petersen (av Flotum 63), Elttor (Jann I Petersen 87), Johannesen.
Malta: M Muscat - Briffa, Wellman (Azzopardi 46), Said, Dimech, Pullicino, Giglio, Antoine Zahra I, Woods, Cohen (Barbara 70), Michael Mifsud.

Aug 18 - Rennes - friendly
France 1 (Luyindula 7)
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Grlic 37)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 26,527. **Ref:** McDonald (Sco)
France: Barthez - Gallas, Squillaci (Givet 46), Abidal, Mendy, Mavuba (Pires 46), Pedretti, Rothen, Evra (Govou 46), Luyindula, Henry (Cisse 46).
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Salihamidzic, Bajic, Barbarez (Sehic 86), Papac, Beslija, Grlic, Bajramovic (Grujic 60), Baljic (Crnogorac 90), Bolic (Misimovic 24), Sabic (Spahic 46).

Aug 18 - Port-au-Prince - friendly
Haiti 0
Brazil 6 (Roger 17, 40, Ronaldinho 33, 70, 80, Nilmar 89)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Oliveira (Bra)
Haiti: Fenelon (Beauzile) - Dieuphene (Maxo), J-J Pierre (Sancius), Gracien (Descollines), Guillaume (Desir), Chery (Germain), Dorcelus (Gilles), Romulus (Gremard), Richardson, Bruny (Mayard), Corriolan (Pierre-Louis).
Brazil: Julio Cesar (Fernando Henrique) - Belletti, Juan (Cris 46), Roque Junior, Roberto Carlos (Adriano Correia 60), Gilberto Silva (Renato 46), Juninho Pernambucano, Edu (Magrao 46), Roger (Pedrinho 60), Ronaldinho, Ronaldo (Nilmar 46).

Aug 18 - Reykjavik - friendly
Iceland 2 (E Gudjohnsen 17, Einarsson 19)
Italy 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 20,204. **Ref:** Frojdfeldt (Swe)
Iceland: B Kristinsson (Arason 48) - Hreidarsson, O O Bjarnason, K O Sigurdsson, I Sigurdsson (Vidarsson 83), Einarsson (Gretarsson 67), B Gunnarsson, R Kristinsson (J K Gudjonsson 75), T Gudjonsson (Marteinsson 83), H Helguson (V Gunnarsson 83), E Gudjohnsen.
Italy: Buffon - Oddo (Birindelli 46), Nesta, Materazzi, Zambrotta (Favalli 58), Perrotta (Diana 46), Gattuso, Volpi (Blasi 46), Bazzani (Toni 55), Fiore, Di Vaio (Miccoli 46).

Aug 18 - Avignon, France - friendly
Ivory Coast 2 (Boka 32, Dindane 68)
Senegal 1 (H Camara 12)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 5,000

Aug 18 - Shizuoka - friendly
Japan 1 (T Suzuki 72)
Argentina 2 (Galletti 4, Santana 40)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Lu (Chn)
Japan: Narazaki - Tanaka (Matsuda 46), Kaji, Alex, Nakazawa (Fujita 46), K Nakata, Miyamoto, Fukunishi (Endo 57), Ogasawara (Motoyama 57), Tamada (T Yamada 80), T Suzuki.
Argentina: Franco - Quiroga, Samuel, G Milito, Scaloni, Bernardi, Placente, Riquelme, Galletti (Ibagaza 63), D Milito (Ponzio 83), Santana (M Rodriguez 60).

Aug 18 - Amman - friendly
Jordan 1 (Akel 21)
Azerbaijan 1 (Ponomarev 23)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 4,000
Azerbaijan: Kramarenko - Shukurov (Tagizade), Hajiyev, R Sadigov, Amirbekov, Agil Mamedov (Guseinov), Emin Guliev, M Gurbanov (Abdullayev), Ponomarev (A Kerimov), G Gurbanov, Nabiyev (I Gurbanov).

Aug 18 - friendly
Kenya 4 (Baraza 11, 33, Sirengo 65, Omondi 85)
Uganda 1 (Tabula 55)
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 5,000

Aug 18 - Riga - friendly
Latvia 0
Wales 2 (Hartson 80, Bellamy 89)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Latvia: Kolinko - Isakovs, Zemlinskis, Stepanovs, Blagonadezdins (Korablovs 74), Laizans, Miholaps (Semjonovs 61), Lobanovs, Rubins, Prohorenkovs (Rimkus 66), Verpakovskis.
Wales: P Jones (Crossley 46) - Delaney, Melville (Collins 24), Page, Thatcher, Koumas (C Robinson 89), Savage (Johnson 46), Speed, Pembridge (G Roberts 69), Bellamy, Hartson (Taylor 84).

Aug 18 - Tiraspol - friendly
Moldova 1 (Miterev 68)
Georgia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Godulyan (Ukr)
Moldova: Hmaruc - Covalenco, Lascencov (Bursuc 76), Olexici, Catinsus, Priganiuc, Covaliciuc (Barisev 90), Savinov (Ivanov 72), Rogaciov (Calincov 61), Cebotari, Miterev (Clescenco 80).
Georgia: Lomaia - Mzhavanadze, Khizanishvili, Kaladze, Kvartaskhelia (Aptsiauri 80), Kobiashvili, Tskitishvili (Mudzhiri 46), Burduli, Iashvili (Dzhakobia 46), Dzamarauli, Demetradze (Aleksidze 62).

Aug 18 - Oslo - friendly
Norway 2 (F Johnsen 32, Riseth 59)
Belgium 2 (Buffel 25, 34)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 16,669. **Ref:** Slupik (Pol)
Norway: Myhre - El Fakiri (Basma 46), Riseth, Lundekvam (Soma 63), Riise, Andresen, Hoseth (Solli 85), Sorensen (Odegaard 85), F Johnsen (T A Flo 60), Gamst Pedersen, Rushfeldt (Arst 60).
Belgium: Peersman - Deflandre, Kompany (Van Buyten 66), Simons, Dheedene (Deschacht 70), Bisconti, Clement, Vermant (Baseggio 62), Goor, Buffel (Pieroni 70), M Mpenza (Sonck 62).

Aug 18 - Poznan - friendly
Poland 1 (Zurawski 76)
Denmark 5 (Madsen 23, 30, 90, Gaardsoe 51, C Jensen 86)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Bebek (Cro)
Poland: Dudek (Boruc 46) - Michal Zewlakow (Klos 46), J Bak, Bosacki (Glowacki 63), Dudka, Kosowski (Gorawski 58), M Lewandowski, Kukielka, Krzynowek, Rasiak (Zurawski 46), Niedzielan (Szymkowiak 69).
Denmark: Sorensen - Priske (Bogelund 79), Helveg, Laursen (C Jensen 46), N Jensen, Gronkjaer (Rommedahl 69), Gravesen, Poulsen, Martin Jorgensen (Perez 59), Tomasson (Gaardsoe 46), Madsen.

Aug 18 - Dublin - friendly
Rep Ireland 1 (A Reid 15)
Bulgaria 1 (Bojinov 70)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 31,887. **Ref:** Brines (Sco)
Rep Ireland: Given (Kenny 71) - Finnan (Quinn 71), Cunningham, Doherty (Breen 46), O'Shea, Miller (Carr 52), Roy Keane (Kavanagh 64), Kilbane, A Reid, Duff, Morrison (Macken 64).
Bulgaria: Zdravkov - Kishishev, Kirilov, Markov, Stoyanov (Topuzakov 64), Stilian Petrov, Yankov (Kamburov 77), Hristov (Yanev 46), Lazarov (Manchev 56), Bojinov, Berbatov (Gargorov 46).

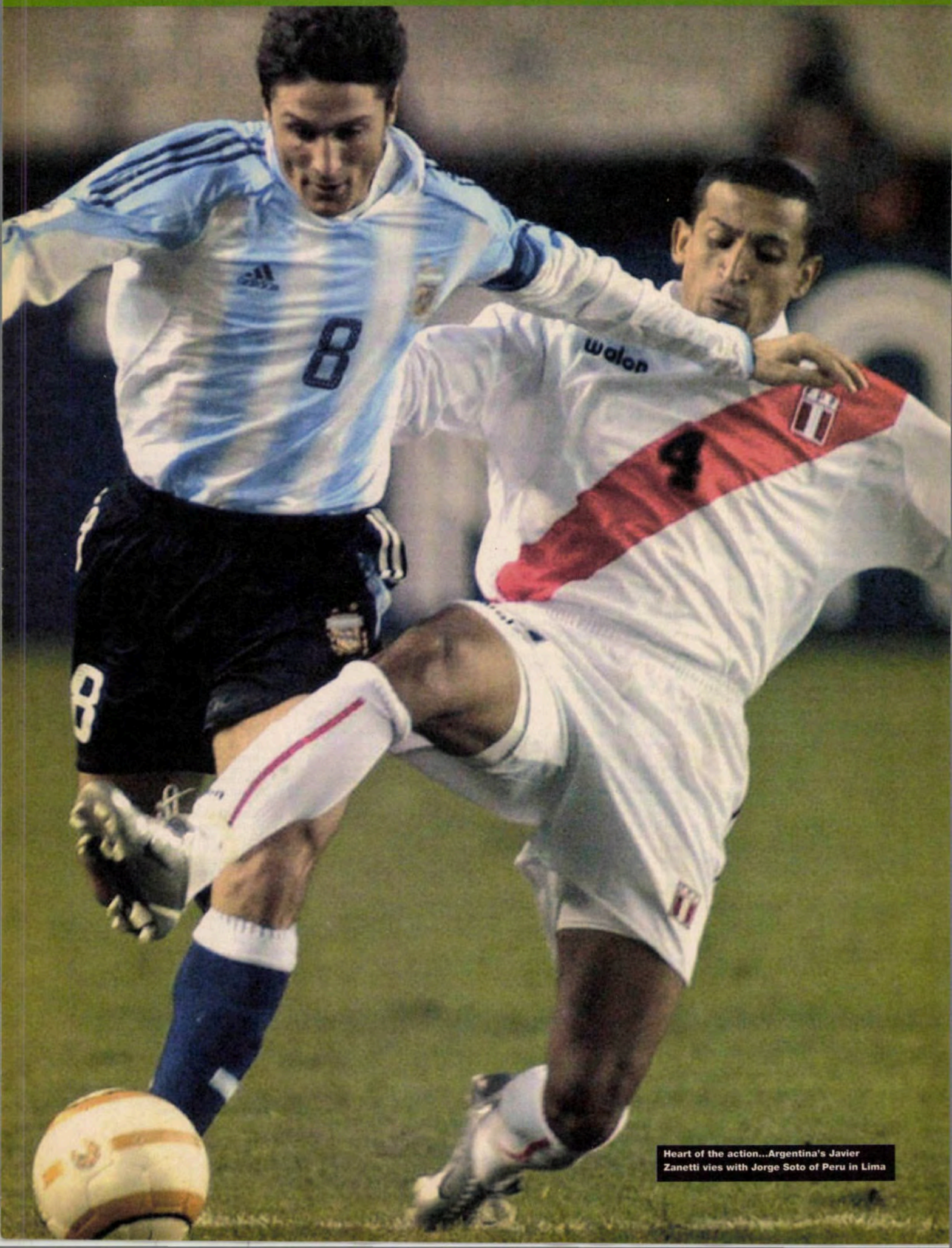
Aug 18 - Moscow - friendly
Russia 4 (Khokhlov 20, Karyaka 54, Bulykin 66, Sychev 88)
Lithuania 3 (Danilevicius 40, Poskus 83, Barasa 89)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 3,500. **Ref:** Mikulski (Pol)
Russia: Ovchinnikov (Malafeev 46) - Anyukov, Sharonov, Smertin (Karyaka 46), Sennikov (Onopko 46), Kolodin, V Bystrov (Boyarintsev 46), Khokhlov, Arshavin (Sychev 46), Radimov, Kerzhakov (Bulykin 46).
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Semberas (Radzinevicius 68), Dziaukstas, Barasa (D Zutautas 90), Mikoliunas (Stankevicius 38), Zvirgzdauskas, Skarbalius, E Cesnauskis, Danilevicius (Kucys 65), Rasanauskas (Tamosauskas 60), Poskus.

Aug 18 - Glasgow - friendly
Scotland 0
Hungary 3 (Huszti pen 45, 53, Marshall og 73)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 15,933. **Ref:** Duhamel (Fra)
Scotland: Marshall - G Caldwell (Thompson 46), Pressley, Webster, Naysmith, Holt, Ferguson (Severin 70), Fletcher (Pearson 74), Quashie, K Miller (Crawford 58), McFadden.
Hungary: Kiraly - Juhasz (Gyepes 83), Stark, A Toth, Bodnar, Feher (Rosa 63), Gera (Leandro 76), Molnar, Huszti (Bodor 87), Torghelle (P Kovacs 25), Simek.

Aug 18 - Ljubljana - friendly
Slovenia 1 (N Ceh 83)
Serbia & Montenegro 1 (Jestrovic 50)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Slovenia: B Mavric - Tanjic (Koren 46), Ilic, Knavs, Karic, M Mavric, Komac, Pokorn (Dedic 66), Seslar (N Ceh 46), Acimovic, Siljak (Semler 89).
Serbia & Montenegro: Jevric - Gavrancic, Vidic, Krstajic, Koroman, Duljaj, Dragutinovic (Petkovic 83), D Stankovic (Maric 71), Vukic, Kezman (Lazovic 90), Milosevic (Jestrovic 46).

Aug 18 - Las Palmas - friendly
Spain 3 (Morientes 40, Tamudo 56, 67)
Venezuela 2 (Rojas 45, Castellin 90)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 32,500. **Ref:** Rodomonti (Ita)
Spain: Canizares - Michel Salgado, Puyol, Ivan Helguera, Romero, Victor (Joaquin 69), Albelda (Xabi Alonso 63), Baraja (Valeron 46), Vicente (Reyes 46), Raul (Fernando Torres 46), Morientes (Tamudo 46).
Venezuela: Angelucci (Ponzo 75) - Vielma (De Ornelas 75), Rey, Cichero, Hernandez (Rondon 64), Jimenez, L Vera (A Gonzalez 64), Paez (Rouga 71), Urdaneta, Rojas, Margiotta (Castellin 67).

Aug 18 - Stockholm - friendly
Sweden 2 (M Jonson 4, Ibrahimovic 69)
Holland 2 (Sneijder 17, Van Bommel 43)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 20,377. **Ref:** Styles (Eng)
Sweden: Isaksson - Lucic, Mellberg (Ostlund 46), P Hansson, Edman (Dorsin 71), Linderoth, M Nilsson (Alexandersson 61), Ljungberg (A Svensson 46), Wilhelmsson, M Jonson (Allback 61), Ibrahimovic.
Holland: Van der Sar - De Jong (Kromkamp 70), Heitinga, Hofland, Van Bronckhorst, Van Bommel, Davids, Van der Vaart (Sneijder 7), Castelen (John 76), Makaay, Van den Bergh.



Heart of the action...Argentina's Javier Zanetti vies with Jorge Soto of Peru in Lima

Aug 18 - Zurich - friendly
Switzerland 0
Northern Ireland 0
Att: 4,000. **Ref:** Vollquartz (Den)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Haas, M Yakin (Henchoz 46), Muller, Spycher, Huggel (Magnin 46), Vogel (Lonfat 77), Wicky, Cabanas (Frei 82), H Yakin, Vonlanthen (Muff 60).
N Ireland: Carroll - A Hughes, Williams (Murdock 67), Craigan (Duff 78), Capaldi, Gillespie (McVeigh 51), Sonner, Johnson, Elliott (Brunt 81), Healy (Hamilton 70), Smith.

Aug 18 - Tunis - friendly
Tunisia 0
South Africa 2 (B McCarthy 2, T Arendse 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Zekrini (Alg)
Tunisia: Zouabi - Sghaier, Sellami (Marzouki 46), Jaidi, Ben Fraj (Rhouma 46), Sdiri, Ghodhbane (Nafti 73), Bouazizi, Benachour, Jaziri (Chedli 46), Santos (Missaoui 65).
South Africa: Vonk (Fernandez 46) - Carnell, A Mokoena, Mabizela, Morris (Ntuka 88), Buckley (Mngomeni 76), Mhlongo (Lekgwathi 84), Vilakazi (Davids 76), Pienaar (Van Heerden 46), B McCarthy (T Arendse 76), Bartlett. *Sent off: Davids.*

Aug 18 - Denizli - friendly
Turkey 1 (Hakan Sukur 14)
Belarus 2 (V Hleb 67, Kouba 90)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Mrkovic (Bos)
Turkey: Rustu - Onder, Umit Ozat, Hakan Unsal, Emre Belozoglu (Bulent Korkmaz 89), Servet (Kursat 46), Nihat, Hakan Sukur (Ersen 64), Serkan (Izzet 46), Serhat (Hasan Sas 46), Tuncay (Gokdeniz 46).
Belarus: Khomutovsky (Sulima 74) - Kulchy, Tarlovsky (Rovneiko 87), Shtanyuk, Gurenko, V Hleb (Kovel 81), Yaskovich, Romaschenko, Omelyanchuk (Kouba 64), Kutuzov (Bulyga 74), A Hleb.

Aug 18 - Bulawayo - friendly
Zimbabwe 2 (Njabulo Ncube 66, Sibanda 87)
Botswana 0
HT: 0-0

Thursday, August 19

Aug 19 - Bangkok - friendly
Thailand 1 (Therdsak 90)
Malaysia 2 (Liew 8, Saravanan 57)
HT: 0-1

Friday, August 20

Aug 20 - Ho Chi Minh City - LG Cup
Vietnam 5 (Le Cong Vinh 2, Thach Bao Khanh, Nguyen Minh Phuong, Pham Van Quyen)
Myanmar 0
Sent off: San Maung (Myanmar)

Sunday, August 22

Aug 22 - Ho Chi Minh City - LG Cup
India 2 (Prakash 42, 83)
Myanmar 1 (Win Nawng 81)
HT: 1-0
India: Mukherjee - Ghosh, Mondal, Gawli, Naik, Lawrence, Venkatesh (Dias; Zirsanga), J B Singh, Roy, Prakash, Yadav (B Singh).

Aug 22 - Harare - friendly
Zimbabwe 2 (Moyo 10, Njabulo Ncube 66)
Uganda 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 3,000

Tuesday, August 24

Aug 24 - Ho Chi Minh City - LG Cup
Vietnam 2 (Le Cong Vinh 21, Thach Bao Khanh 57)
India 1 (Lawrence 87)
HT: 1-0
Sent off: Renedy Singh (India) 88min; Nguyen Huy Hoang (Vietnam) 88min
India: Akhtar - Mondal, Jose, Gawli, Roy, Lawrence, Venkatesh, Zirsanga, Naik, B Singh, Bhutia.

Thursday, August 26

Aug 26 - friendly
Bahrain 0
Kuwait 0

Aug 26 - friendly
Yemen 1
Syria 2

Saturday, August 28

Aug 28 - friendly
Yemen 2
Syria 1
HT: 0-0

Aug 28 - Kitwe - friendly
Zambia 2 (Kaposa 8, Mwandila 38)
Rwanda 1 (Gaseruka 71)
HT: 2-0

Tuesday, August 31

Aug 31 - friendly
Jordan 2
Lebanon 2
HT: 2-2

Aug 31 - friendly
Maldives 0
Oman 1
HT: 0-1

Wednesday, September 1

Sep 1 - friendly
Saudi Arabia 1
Kuwait 1
HT: 1-0

Thursday, September 2

Sep 2 - friendly
Bahrain 1
Palestine 0
HT: 0-0

Friday, September 3

Sep 3 - Utrecht - friendly
Holland 3 (Van Bommel 23, Ooijer 56, Landzaat 78)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Brines (Sco)
Holland: Van der Sar (Stekelenburg 46) - Boulahrouz, Ooijer, Bouma, Zenden, Davids (Van der Vaart 46), Van Bommel (Kuijt 46), Sneijder, Van den Bergh (Landzaat 46), Makaay (Van Hooijdonk 46), Denneboom (John 46).
Liechtenstein: Heeb - Telser, D'Elia, Ritter, Michael Stocklasa, Vogt (R Buchel 82), Martin Stocklasa (Rohrer 55), Gerster, R Beck (Ritzberger 89), M Frick, T Beck (M Buchel 65).

Sep 3 - friendly
Maldives 1
Oman 2
HT: 0-1

**Sep 3 - Valencia - friendly*
Spain 1 (Raul pen 56)
Scotland 1 (Baraja og 17)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 11,000. **Ref:** Bre (Fra)
**Match abandoned after 59mins (floodlight failure)*
Spain: Casillas - Lopez Rekarte, Marchena (Ivan Helguera 57), Puyol, Del Horno, Xabi Alonso, Baraja (Valeron 46), Joaquin, Reyes, Fernando Torres (Raul 46), Tamudo (Vicente 46).
Scotland: Gordon - G Caldwell, Webster, Mackay, Naysmith, Ferguson, McNamara, Quashie, McFadden (Pearson 46), Fletcher (Miller 57), Crawford (Cameron 57).

Saturday, September 4

Sep 4 - friendly
Singapore 2
Indonesia 0
HT: 1-0

Wednesday, September 8

Sep 8 - Berlin - friendly
Germany 1 (Kuranyi 17)
Brazil 1 (Ronaldinho 9)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 74,315. **Ref:** Meier (Swi)
Germany: Kahn - Hinkel (Gorlitz 87), Fahrenhorst, Huth, Lahm, Frings, Deisler (Podolski 87), Ballack, Schneider, Asamoah (Klose 70), Kuranyi.
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Belletti (Maicon 62), Juan, Roque Junior, Roberto Carlos, Edmilson, Juninho Pernambucano (Renato 62), Ronaldinho (Alex 62), Edu, Adriano (Julio Baptista 65), Ronaldo.

COSAFA CASTLE CUP

Semi-finals draw

Mozambique v Angola (Sep 18/19, Maputo)
Zimbabwe v Zambia (Oct 2/3, Harare)

OLYMPIC GAMES

MEN'S FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT

Group A

11.08.04 .....Greece-South Korea.....2-2
11.08.04 .....Mali-Mexico.....0-0
14.08.04 .....South Korea-Mexico.....1-0
14.08.04 .....Greece-Mali.....0-2
17.08.04 .....South Korea-Mali.....3-3
17.08.04 .....Greece-Mexico.....2-3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Mali	3	1	2	0	5	3	5
South Korea	3	1	2	0	6	5	5
Mexico	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Greece	3	0	1	2	4	7	1

Group B

12.08.04 .....Paraguay-Japan.....4-3
12.08.04 .....Ghana-Italy.....2-2
15.08.04 .....Paraguay-Ghana.....1-2
15.08.04 .....Japan-Italy.....2-3
18.08.04 .....Paraguay-Italy.....1-0
18.08.04 .....Japan-Ghana.....1-0

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Paraguay	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Italy	3	1	1	1	5	5	4
Ghana	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Japan	3	1	0	2	6	7	3

Group C

11.08.04 .....Tunisia-Australia.....1-1
11.08.04 .....Argentina-Serbia & M'negro.....6-0
14.08.04 .....Serbia & M'negro-Australia.....1-5
14.08.04 .....Argentina-Tunisia.....2-0
17.08.04 .....Argentina-Australia.....1-0
17.08.04 .....Serbia & M'negro-Tunisia.....2-3

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Argentina	3	3	0	0	9	0	9
Australia	3	1	1	1	6	3	4
Tunisia	3	1	1	1	4	5	4
Serbia & M'gro	3	0	0	3	3	14	0

Group D

12.08.04 .....Costa Rica-Morocco.....0-0
12.08.04 .....Iraq-Portugal.....4-2
15.08.04 .....Costa Rica-Iraq.....0-2
15.08.04 .....Morocco-Portugal.....1-2
18.08.04 .....Costa Rica-Portugal.....4-2
18.08.04 .....Morocco-Iraq.....2-1

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iraq	3	2	0	1	7	4	6
Costa Rica	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
Morocco	3	1	1	1	3	3	4
Portugal	3	1	0	2	6	9	3

Quarter-finals

21.08.04 .....Mali-Italy.....(aet) 0-1
21.08.04 .....Iraq-Australia.....1-0
21.08.04 .....Argentina-Costa Rica.....4-0
21.08.04 .....Paraguay-South Korea.....3-2

Semi-finals

24.08.04 .....Italy-Argentina.....0-3
24.08.04 .....Iraq-Paraguay.....1-3

Bronze-medal match

Aug 27 - Thessaloniki
Italy 1 (Gilardino 8)
Iraq 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 5,203. **Ref:** Larrionda (Uru)
Italy: Pelizzoli - Moretti (Chiellini 85), Ferrari, Pinzi (Mesto 78), Palombo, Barzagli, Bovo, Donadel, Del Nero, Pirlo, Gilardino.
Iraq: Nour - Saad, Bassim, Haidar Jabar, Salih (Younis 77), Abdul Wahab, Razzaq, Hawar (Ahmed Salah 84), Qusay, Haidar Abdul, Mahdi (Emad 57).

Final

Aug 28 - Karaiskaki stadium, Athens
Argentina 1 (Tevez 18)
Paraguay 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 41,116. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Argentina: Lux - Ayala, Coloccini, Heinze, Mascherano, Tevez, Rosales, D'Alessandro, Kily Gonzalez, L Gonzalez, Delgado (Rodriguez 76).
Paraguay: D Barreto - Martinez, Manzur, Gamarra, Esquivel (Gonzalez 76), Gimenez, E Barreto (Cristaldo 72), Bareiro, Figueredo, Torres, Enciso (Diaz 63). *Sent off: Martinez 66min, Figueredo 82min.*

2006 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

AFRICA

5 finals berths

Group 1

Sep 4 - Lusaka
Zambia 1 (Kalusha 90)
Liberia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Nchengwa (Bot)

Sep 5 - Bamako
Mali 2 (Diallo 4, Kanoute 54)
Senegal 2 (H Camara 45, Dia 84)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Guezzaz (Mor)

Sep 5 - Lome
Togo 2 (Adebayor 37, 80)
Congo 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Mbera (Gab)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Togo	4	2	1	1	5	2	7
Senegal	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Zambia	4	2	1	1	3	2	7
Congo	4	2	0	2	4	4	6
Liberia	4	1	1	2	1	4	4
Mali	4	0	2	2	3	5	2

05.06.04 .....Senegal-Congo.....2-0
05.06.04 .....Zambia-Togo.....1-0
06.06.04 .....Liberia-Mali.....1-0
19.06.04 .....Mali-Zambia.....1-1
20.06.04 .....Congo-Liberia.....3-0
20.06.04 .....Togo-Senegal.....3-1
03.07.04 .....Senegal-Zambia.....1-0
04.07.04 .....Congo-Mali.....1-0
04.07.04 .....Liberia-Togo.....0-0
04.09.04 .....Zambia-Liberia.....1-0
05.09.04 .....Mali-Senegal.....2-2
05.09.04 .....Togo-Congo.....2-0
10.10.04 .....Congo-Zambia
10.10.04 .....Liberia-Senegal
10.10.04 .....Togo-Mali
25.03.05 .....Mali-Togo
25.03.05 .....Senegal-Liberia
25.03.05 .....Zambia-Congo
03.06.05 .....Congo-Senegal
03.06.05 .....Mali-Liberia
03.06.05 .....Togo-Zambia
17.06.05 .....Liberia-Congo
17.06.05 .....Senegal-Togo

17.06.05 .....Zambia-Mali
02.09.05 .....Mali-Congo
02.09.05 .....Togo-Liberia
02.09.05 .....Zambia-Senegal
07.10.05 .....Congo-Togo
07.10.05 .....Liberia-Zambia
07.10.05 .....Senegal-Mali

Group 2

Sep 4 - Ouagadougou
Burkina Faso 2
Uganda 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Ould Lemghambodj (Mra)

Sep 5 - Kinshasa
DR Congo 1 (Kabamba 86)
South Africa 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 85,000. **Ref:** Hicuburundi (Brd)

Sep 5 - Kumasi
Ghana 2
Cape Verde Islands 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Tamuni (Lby)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ghana	4	2	1	1	6	2	7
DR Congo	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Burkina Faso	4	2	0	2	5	5	6
South Africa	4	2	0	2	4	5	6
Cape Verde Is	4	1	1	2	3	5	4
Uganda	4	1	1	2	2	4	4

05.06.04 .....Burkina Faso-Ghana.....1-0
05.06.04 .....South Africa-Cape Verde Is 2-1
05.06.04 .....Uganda-DR Congo.....1-0
19.06.04 .....Cape Verde Is-Uganda.....1-0
20.06.04 .....DR Congo-Burkina Faso 3-2
20.06.04 .....Ghana-South Africa.....3-0
03.07.04 .....Cape Verde Is-DR Congo 1-1
03.07.04 .....South Africa-Burkina Faso 2-0
03.07.04 .....Uganda-Ghana 1-1
04.09.04 .....Burkina Faso-Uganda.....2-0
05.09.04 .....DR Congo-South Africa 1-0
05.09.04 .....Ghana-Cape Verde Is.....2-0
09.10.04 .....Cape Verde Is-Burkina Faso
10.10.04 .....Ghana-DR Congo
10.10.04 .....Uganda-South Africa
25.03.05 .....Burkina Faso-Cape Verde Is
25.03.05 .....DR Congo-Ghana
25.03.05 .....South Africa-Uganda
03.06.05 .....Cape Verde Is-South Africa
03.06.05 .....DR Congo-Uganda
03.06.05 .....Ghana-Burkina Faso
17.06.05 .....Burkina Faso-DR Congo
17.06.05 .....South Africa-Ghana
17.06.05 .....Uganda-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 .....Burkina Faso-South Africa
02.09.05 .....DR Congo-Cape Verde Is
02.09.05 .....Ghana-Uganda
07.10.05 .....Cape Verde Is-Ghana
07.10.05 .....South Africa-DR Congo
07.10.05 .....Uganda-Burkina Faso

Group 3

Sep 3 - Tripoli
Libya 4 (Al-Shibani 9, Kara 47, Osman 51, Suliman 70)
Benin 1 (Osseni 12)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Kidane Tesfu (Eri)

Sep 5 - Cairo
Egypt 3 (Shawki 45, A Hassan pen 74, T El-Sayed 86)
Cameroon 2 (Tchato 88, Eto'o 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Lim (Mrs)

Sep 5 - Abidjan
Ivory Coast 5 (Drogba pen 12, Dindane 15, 64, Yapi 25, Kone 55)
Sudan 0
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Mana (Nig)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	4	3	0	1	9	3	9
Egypt	4	2	1	1	10	7	7
Cameroon	4	2	1	1	6	4	7
Libya	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Benin	4	0	2	2	6	10	2
Sudan	4	0	1	3	1	10	1

06.06.04 .....Cameroon-Benin 2-1
06.06.04 .....Ivory Coast-Libya 2-0
06.06.04 .....Sudan-Egypt.....0-3
18.06.04 .....Libya-Cameroon.....0-0
20.06.04 .....Benin-Sudan 1-1
20.06.04 .....Egypt-Ivory Coast.....1-2
03.07.04 .....Sudan-Libya 0-1
04.07.04 .....Benin-Egypt.....3-3
04.07.04 .....Cameroon-Ivory Coast.....2-0
03.09.04 .....Libya-Benin 4-1
05.09.04 .....Egypt-Cameroon 3-2
05.09.04 .....Ivory Coast-Sudan.....5-0
08.10.04 .....Libya-Egypt
09.10.04 .....Sudan-Cameroon
10.10.04 .....Benin-Ivory Coast
25.03.05 .....Cameroon-Sudan
25.03.05 .....Egypt-Libya
25.03.05 .....Ivory Coast-Benin
03.06.05 .....Benin-Cameroon
03.06.05 .....Egypt-Sudan
03.06.05 .....Libya-Ivory Coast
17.06.05 .....Cameroon-Libya
17.06.05 .....Ivory Coast-Egypt
17.06.05 .....Sudan-Benin
02.09.05 .....Egypt-Benin
02.09.05 .....Ivory Coast-Cameroon
02.09.05 .....Libya-Sudan
07.10.05 .....Benin-Libya
07.10.05 .....Cameroon-Egypt
07.10.05 .....Sudan-Ivory Coast

Group 4

Sep 3 - Harare
Zimbabwe 0
Nigeria 3
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Mandzioukouta (Con)

Sep 5 - Annaba
Algeria 0
Gabon 3 (Aubame 56, Akieremy 73, Bito'o 84)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 51,000. **Ref:** Ndoye (Sen)
Sent off: Cherrad (Algeria) 41min

Sep 5 - Luanda
Angola 1 (Freddy 52)
Rwanda 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Damon (SAf)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	4	3	0	1	6	1	9
Angola	4	2	2	0	4	2	8
Gabon	4	1	2	1	7	6	5
Zimbabwe	4	1	2	1	4	5	5
Rwanda	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Algeria	4	0	2	2	1	5	2

05.06.04 .....Algeria-Angola.....0-0
05.06.04 .....Gabon-Zimbabwe.....1-1
05.06.04 .....Nigeria-Rwanda 2-0
19.06.04 .....Rwanda-Gabon.....3-1
20.06.04 .....Angola-Nigeria 1-0
20.06.04 .....Zimbabwe-Algeria.....1-1
03.07.04 .....Gabon-Angola.....2-2
03.07.04 .....Nigeria-Algeria 1-0
03.07.04 .....Rwanda-Zimbabwe 0-2
03.09.04 .....Zimbabwe-Nigeria.....0-3
05.09.04 .....Algeria-Gabon 0-3
05.09.04 .....Angola-Rwanda.....1-0
09.10.04 .....Gabon-Nigeria
09.10.04 .....Rwanda-Algeria
10.10.04 .....Angola-Zimbabwe
25.03.05 .....Algeria-Rwanda
25.03.05 .....Nigeria-Gabon
25.03.05 .....Zimbabwe-Angola
03.06.05 .....Angola-Algeria
03.06.05 .....Rwanda-Nigeria
03.06.05 .....Zimbabwe-Gabon
17.06.05 .....Algeria-Zimbabwe
17.06.05 .....Gabon-Rwanda
17.06.05 .....Nigeria-Angola
02.09.05 .....Algeria-Nigeria
02.09.05 .....Angola-Gabon
02.09.05 .....Zimbabwe-Rwanda
07.10.05 .....Gabon-Algeria
07.10.05 .....Nigeria-Zimbabwe
07.10.05 .....Rwanda-Angola

Group 5

Sep 4 - Nairobi
Kenya 3 (Barasa 21, 29, Oliech 25)
Malawi 2 (Munthali 41, Mabedi pen 86)
HT: 3-1. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Mwanza (Zam)

Sep 4 - Rabat
Morocco 1 (El-Karkouri 74)
Tunisia 1 (Santos 11)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 45,000. **Ref:** Auda (Egy)
Sent off: Ribabro (Tunisia) 75min

Sep 5 - Conakry
Guinea 4 (Feindouno 44, Youla 54, Diawara 60, Mansare 82)
Botswana 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Agbenyega Agbeko (Gha)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guinea	3	2	1	0	7	2	7
Morocco	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Tunisia	3	1	1	1	6	4	4
Kenya	1	1	0	0	3	2	3
Botswana	4	1	0	3	3	9	3
Malawi	4	0	2	2	4	7	2

05.06.04 .....Malawi-Morocco 1-1
05.06.04 .....Tunisia-Botswana 4-1
19.06.04 .....Botswana-Malawi 2-0
20.06.04 .....Guinea-Tunisia 2-1
03.07.04 .....Botswana-Morocco.....0-1
03.07.04 .....Malawi-Guinea 1-1
04.09.04 .....Kenya-Malawi 3-2
04.09.04 .....Morocco-Tunisia 1-1
05.09.04 .....Guinea-Botswana.....4-0
09.10.04 .....Botswana-Kenya
09.10.04 .....Malawi-Tunisia
10.10.04 .....Guinea-Morocco
25.03.05 .....Kenya-Botswana
25.03.05 .....Morocco-Guinea
25.03.05 .....Tunisia-Malawi
03.06.05 .....Morocco-Malawi
03.06.05 .....Botswana-Tunisia
03.06.05 .....Guinea-Kenya
17.06.05 .....Kenya-Morocco
17.06.05 .....Malawi-Botswana
17.06.05 .....Tunisia-Guinea
02.09.05 .....Kenya-Tunisia
02.09.05 .....Morocco-Botswana
02.09.05 .....Guinea-Malawi
07.10.05 .....Malawi-Kenya
07.10.05 .....Tunisia-Morocco
07.10.05 .....Botswana-Guinea
tba .....Kenya-Guinea
tba .....Morocco-Kenya
tba .....Tunisia-Kenya

Group winners qualify for finals

ASIA

4.5 finals berths

1st stage

Group 1

Sep 8 - Amman
Jordan 0
Iran 2
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lu (Chn)

Sep 8 - Vientiane
Laos 1
Qatar 6
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Napitupulu (Ins)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	4	3	0	1	12	2	9
Jordan	4	3	0	1	7	2	9
Qatar	4	2	0	2	12	5	6
Laos	4	0	0	4	1	23	0

18.02.04 .....Iran-Qatar 3-1
18.02.04 .....Jordan-Laos 5-0
31.03.04 .....Jordan-Qatar 1-0
31.03.04 .....Laos-Iran 0-7
09.06.04 .....Iran-Jordan 0-1
09.06.04 .....Qatar-Laos.....5-0
08.09.04 .....Jordan-Iran 0-2
08.09.04 .....Laos-Qatar.....1-6
13.10.04 .....Laos-Jordan
13.10.04 .....Qatar-Iran
17.11.04 .....Iran-Laos
17.11.04 .....Qatar-Jordan

Group 2

Sep 8 - Rayyan, Qatar
Palestine 0
Uzbekistan 3
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Maidin (Sin)

Sep 8 - Taipei
Taiwan 1
Iraq 4
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Baskar (Ind)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Uzbekistan	4	3	1	0	8	1	10
Iraq	4	2	2	0	12	4	8
Palestine	4	1	1	2	9	7	4
Taiwan	4	0	0	4	2	19	0

18.02.04 .....Palestine-Taiwan 8-0
18.02.04 .....Uzbekistan-Iraq 1-1
31.03.04 .....Palestine-Iraq.....1-1
31.03.04 .....Taiwan-Uzbekistan 0-1
09.06.04 .....Iraq-Taiwan.....6-1
09.06.04 .....Uzbekistan-Palestine 3-0
08.09.04 .....Palestine-Uzbekistan 0-3
08.09.04 .....Taiwan-Iraq 1-4
12.10.04 .....Iraq-Uzbekistan
13.10.04 .....Taiwan-Palestine
16.11.04 .....Iraq-Palestine
17.11.04 .....Uzbekistan-Taiwan

Group 3

Sep 8 - Calcutta
India 0
Japan 4
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hajjar (Syr)

Sep 8 - Singapore
Singapore 0
Oman 2 (Shaaban 3, Ali 82)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 4,000. **Ref:** Arambakade Gedara (Sri)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Japan	4	4	0	0	14	1	12
Oman	4	3	0	1	14	2	9
India	4	1	0	3	2	16	3
Singapore	4	0	0	4	1	12	0

18.02.04 .....India-Singapore.....1-0
18.02.04 .....Japan-Oman.....1-0
31.03.04 .....India-Oman.....1-5
31.03.04 .....Singapore-Japan.....1-2
09.06.04 .....Japan-India 7-0
09.06.04 .....Oman-Singapore 7-0
08.09.04 .....India-Japan 0-4
08.09.04 .....Singapore-Oman 0-2
13.10.04 .....Oman-Japan
13.10.04 .....Singapore-India
17.11.04 .....Japan-Singapore
17.11.04 .....Oman-India

Group 4

Sep 8 - Hong Kong
Hong Kong 0
Kuwait 2
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Busurmankulov (Kyr)

Sep 8 - Penang
Malaysia 0
China 1
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Karim (Bhn)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
China	4	4	0	0	7	0	12
Kuwait	4	3	0	1	8	1	9
Hong Kong	4	1	0	3	3	8	3
Malaysia	4	0	0	4	1	10	0

18.02.04 .....China-Kuwait.....1-0
18.02.04 .....Malaysia-Hong Kong.....1-3
31.03.04 .....Hong Kong-China 0-1
31.03.04 .....Malaysia-Kuwait 0-2
09.06.04 .....China-Malaysia 4-0
09.06.04 .....Kuwait-Hong Kong 4-0
08.09.04 .....Hong Kong-Kuwait.....0-2
08.09.04 .....Malaysia-China 0-1
13.10.04 .....Hong Kong-Malaysia
13.10.04 .....Kuwait-China
17.11.04 .....China-Hong Kong
17.11.04 .....Kuwait-Malaysia

Group 5

Sep 8 - Pyongyang
North Korea 4
Thailand 1
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Moradi (Irn)

Sep 8 - Sana'a
Yemen 3
United Arab Emirates 1
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Al-Ghamdi (Sau)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
North Korea	4	2	2	0	9	3	8
UAE	4	2	1	1	5	3	7
Yemen	4	1	1	2	4	8	4
Thailand	4	1	0	3	5	9	3

18.02.04 .....UAE-Thailand.....1-0
18.02.04 .....Yemen-North Korea.....1-1
31.03.04 .....North Korea-UAE.....0-0
31.03.04 .....Yemen-Thailand.....0-3
09.06.04 .....Thailand-North Korea.....1-4
09.06.04 .....UAE-Yemen.....3-0
08.09.04 .....North Korea-Thailand.....4-1
08.09.04 .....Yemen-UAE.....3-1
13.10.04 .....North Korea-Yemen
13.10.04 .....Thailand-UAE
17.11.04 .....Thailand-Yemen
17.11.04 .....UAE-North Korea

Group 6

Sep 8 - Bishkek
Kyrgyzstan 1
Bahrain 2
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Rungklay (Tha)

Sep 8 - Dushanbe
Tajikistan 0
Syria 1
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Mohd Salleh (Mly)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Bahrain	4	3	1	0	9	2	10
Syria	4	2	1	1	5	4	7
Tajikistan	4	1	1	2	3	4	4
Kyrgyzstan	4	0	1	3	3	10	1

18.02.04 .....Bahrain-Syria.....2-1
18.02.04 .....Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan.....1-2
31.03.04 .....Kyrgyzstan-Syria.....1-1
31.03.04 .....Tajikistan-Bahrain.....0-0
09.06.04 .....Bahrain-Kyrgyzstan.....5-0
10.06.04 .....Syria-Tajikistan.....2-1
08.09.04 .....Kyrgyzstan-Bahrain.....1-2
08.09.04 .....Tajikistan-Syria.....0-1
13.10.04 .....Syria-Bahrain
13.10.04 .....Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan
17.11.04 .....Bahrain-Tajikistan
17.11.04 .....Syria-Kyrgyzstan

Group 7

Sep 8 - Male
Maldives 2
Lebanon 5
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Al-Ajmi (Omn)

Sep 8 - Ho Chi Minh City
Vietnam 1
South Korea 2
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Yoshida (Jap)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
South Korea	4	3	1	0	6	1	10
Lebanon	4	3	0	1	10	4	9
Vietnam	4	1	0	3	5	6	3
Maldives	4	0	1	3	2	12	1

18.02.04 .....South Korea-Lebanon.....2-0
18.02.04 .....Vietnam-Maldives.....4-0
31.03.04 .....Maldives-South Korea.....0-0
31.03.04 .....Vietnam-Lebanon.....0-2
09.06.04 .....Lebanon-Maldives.....3-0
09.06.04 .....South Korea-Vietnam.....2-0
08.09.04 .....Maldives-Lebanon.....2-5
08.09.04 .....Vietnam-South Korea.....1-2
13.10.04 .....Lebanon-South Korea
13.10.04 .....Maldives-Vietnam
17.11.04 .....Lebanon-Vietnam
17.11.04 .....South Korea-Maldives

Group 8

Sep 8 - Colombo
Sri Lanka 2
Indonesia 2
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marshoud (Jor)

Sep 8 - Ashgabat
Turkmenistan 0
Saudi Arabia 1 (Al-Qahtani 47)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Kwon (SKo)
Sent off: N Bayramov (Turkmenistan) 81min

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	4	4	0	0	8	0	12
Turkmenistan	4	2	0	2	5	5	6
Indonesia	4	1	1	2	4	8	4
Sri Lanka	4	0	1	3	2	6	1

18.02.04 .....Saudi Arabia-Indonesia.....3-0
18.02.04 .....Turkmenistan-Sri Lanka.....2-0
31.03.04 .....Sri Lanka-Saudi Arabia.....0-1
31.03.04 .....Turkmenistan-Indonesia.....3-1
09.06.04 .....Indonesia-Sri Lanka.....1-0
09.06.04 .....Saudi Arabia-Turkmenistan.....3-0
08.09.04 .....Sri Lanka-Indonesia.....2-2
08.09.04 .....Turkmenistan-Saudi Arabia.....0-1
09.10.04 .....Sri Lanka-Turkmenistan
13.10.04 .....Indonesia-Saudi Arabia
17.11.04 .....Indonesia-Turkmenistan
17.11.04 .....Saudi Arabia-Sri Lanka

Group winners advance to 2nd stage

2nd stage

The eight qualifiers are divided into two groups of four. The winners and runners-up of these groups qualify for finals. The two third-placed sides meet in a two-leg play-off, the winner of which meets the fourth-placed CONCACAF team over two legs for a place in finals

CONCACAF

3.5 finals berths

2nd stage

Group 1

Aug 18 - San Salvador
El Salvador 2 (V Velasquez 7, Rodriguez pen 45)
Panama 1 (Julio Dely Valdes 35)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
El Salvador: S Rivera - Gochez (Silva 51; Marvin Gonzalez 87), Guevara, V Velasquez, Prado, Galdamez (D Mejia 89), Cerritos, Rodriguez, Murgas, Pacheco, Jose Martinez. *Sent off: Jose Martinez 42min.*
Panama: James - Miranda, Moreno, Henriquez, Rivera, Mitre, Julio Dely Valdes, Phillips, Lombardo (Gomez 39), Blanco (Garces 60), Medina (Jorge Dely Valdes 73).

Aug 18 - Kingston
Jamaica 1 (Goodison 48)
United States 1 (Ching 89)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Mattus (CR)
Jamaica: Ricketts - Marshall, F Davis, C Davis, Goodison, Gardner, A Williams, Hyde, Whitmore, Ralph, King (Fuller 67).
United States: Keller - Vanney, Bocanegra, Pope, Hejduk, Beasley, Stewart (Jones 69), Armas (Lewis 76), Reyna, Donovan, McBride (Ching 60).

Sep 4 - Kingston
Jamaica 1 (Ralph 77)
Panama 2 (Brown 3, Julio Dely Valdes 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,000. **Ref:** Batres (Gtm)

Sep 4 - Foxboro
United States 2 (Ching 6, Donovan 69)
El Salvador 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,266. **Ref:** Brizan (T&T)
Sent off: Alas (El Salvador) 28min
United States: Howard - Cherundolo (Jones 69), Bocanegra, Gibbs, Convey, Reyna, Zavagnin (Mathis 82), Donovan, Beasley, Ching, Casey (McBride 76).

Sep 8 - San Salvador
El Salvador 0
Jamaica 3 (King 3, 38, Hyde 40)
HT: 0-3. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Alcala (Mex)

Sep 8 - Panama City
Panama 1 (Brown 69)
United States 1 (Jones 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
United States: Keller - Hejduk, Pope, Bocanegra, Vanney, Reyna, Beasley, Donovan, Mathis (Jones 57), Ching (Lewis 77), Casey (McBride 62).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
United States	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Jamaica	3	1	1	1	5	3	4
Panama	3	1	1	1	4	4	4
El Salvador	3	1	0	2	2	6	3

18.08.04 .....El Salvador-Panama.....2-1
18.08.04 .....Jamaica-United States.....1-1
04.09.04 .....Jamaica-Panama.....1-2
04.09.04 .....United States-El Salvador.....2-0
08.09.04 .....El Salvador-Jamaica.....0-3
08.09.04 .....Panama-United States.....1-1
09.10.04 .....El Salvador-United States
09.10.04 .....Panama-Jamaica
13.10.04 .....Jamaica-El Salvador
13.10.04 .....United States-Panama
17.11.04 .....Panama-El Salvador
17.11.04 .....United States-Jamaica

Group 2

Aug 18 - Vancouver
Canada 0
Guatemala 2 (Ruiz 8, 56)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Sibrian (ESl)
Canada: Onstad - Pizzolitto, Jazic, Watson, Stalteri, Imhof, Occean, De Guzman (Serioux 44), Simpson (Peters 59), Peschisolido, De Rosario.
Guatemala: Trigueno - Melgar, Chen, Cabrera, Thompson, Romero, Ramirez, Martinez, Pezzarossi, Rodriguez, Ruiz.

Aug 18 - Alajuela
Costa Rica 2 (Herron 20, 36)
Honduras 5 (D Suazo 21, Leon 35, Guevara pen 67, Guerrero 87, S Martinez 90)
HT: 2-2. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Rodriguez (Mex)
Costa Rica: R Gonzalez - C Castro, A Castro, Marin, G Martinez, Sequeira, Bryce, M Solis (A Solis 80), Centeno (Soto 64), Wanchope, Herron (Gomez 62).
Honduras: Valladares - Bernardez, Figueroa, Guevara, Izaguirre, Guerrero, W Palacios, Leon, M Suazo, Alvarez (Marin 77), D Suazo (S Martinez 83).

Sep 4 - Edmonton
Canada 1 (De Vos 82)
Honduras 1 (Guevara pen 88)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Archundia (Mex)
Sent off: Stalteri (Canada) 90min

Sep 5 - Guatemala City
Guatemala 2 (Plata 57, 73)
Costa Rica 1 (A Solis 24)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 24,460. **Ref:** Stott (USA)
Sent off: Herron (Costa Rica) 17min

Sep 8 - San Jose
Costa Rica 1 (Wanchope 46)
Canada 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Ramdhan (T&T)

Sep 8 - San Pedro Sula
Honduras 2 (Guevara 51, D Suazo 64)
Guatemala 2 (Ruiz 19, Pezzarossi 49)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 40,000. **Ref:** Prendergast (Jam)

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Guatemala	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Honduras	3	1	2	0	8	5	5
Costa Rica	3	1	0	2	4	7	3
Canada	3	0	1	2	1	4	1

18.08.04 .....Canada-Guatemala.....0-2
18.08.04 .....Costa Rica-Honduras.....2-5
04.09.04 .....Canada-Honduras.....1-1
05.09.04 .....Guatemala-Costa Rica.....2-1
08.09.04 .....Costa Rica-Canada.....1-0
08.09.04 .....Honduras-Guatemala.....2-2
09.10.04 .....Costa Rica-Guatemala
09.10.04 .....Honduras-Canada
13.10.04 .....Canada-Costa Rica
13.10.04 .....Guatemala-Honduras
17.11.04 .....Guatemala-Canada
17.11.04 .....Honduras-Costa Rica

Group 3

Aug 18 - Kingstown
St Vincent & The Grenadines 0
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (McFarlane 79, 86)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Vaughn (USA)
St Vincent & The Grenadines: Bramble - M Forde, C Huggins, Chewitt, Gonsalves (Ballantyne 85), V John, S Samuel (Guy 75), James, Velox, M Charles, Prince (Williams 66).
Trinidad & Tobago: D Williams - M Andrews, Lawrence, Rojas, Sancho, Dwarika (Spann 80), Eve, Rougier, S John, McFarlane (Sealy 87), Jones (Rahim 60).

Sep 4 - Basseterre
St Kitts & Nevis 1 (G Isaac 40)
Trinidad & Tobago 2 (McFarlane 44, S John 88)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Castillo (Gtm)

Sep 8 - Port-of-Spain
Trinidad & Tobago 1 (S John 39)
Mexico 3 (Arellano 1, 80, Borgetti 19)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Navarro (Can)
Mexico: O Sanchez - Carmona, F Rodriguez, H Sanchez, Salcido (Pineda 74), M Perez, Pardo, L Perez, Naelson (Altamirano 85), Borgetti, Arellano.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Trinidad & Tob	3	2	0	1	5	4	6
Mexico	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
St Kitts & Nevis	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
St Vincent/G'nes	1	0	0	1	0	2	0

18.08.04 .....St Vincent/G'dines-Trin & Tob.....0-2
04.09.04 .....St Kitts & Nevis-Trinidad & Tob...1-2
08.09.04 .....Trinidad & Tobago-Mexico.....1-3
10.09.04 .....St Vincent/G'dines-St Kitts & N
06.10.04 .....Mexico-St Vincent/G'dines
09.10.04 .....St Vincent/G'dines-Mexico
09.10.04 .....Trinidad & Tob-St Kitts & Nevis
13.10.04 .....Mexico-Trinidad & Tob
13.10.04 .....St Kitts & N-St Vincent/G'dines
13.11.04 .....St Kitts & Nevis-Mexico
17.11.04 .....Mexico-St Kitts & Nevis
17.11.04 .....Trin & Tob-St Vincent/G'dines

Top two from each group advance to 3rd stage

3rd stage

The six qualifiers play in a single group, the top three from which qualify for finals. The fourth-placed team meet the winners of the Asian play-off over two legs for a place in finals

EUROPE

14 finals berths (including hosts Germany, who qualify automatically)

Group 1

Aug 18 - Skopje
Macedonia 3 (Pandev 5, Sakiri 37, Sumulikoski 89)
Armenia 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 10,000. **Ref:** Genov (Bul)
Macedonia: Milosevski - Stavrevski, M Krstev, Sedloski, I Mitreski, A Mitreski, Sumulikoski, Trajanov (Vasoski 65), Dimitrovski (Jancevski 46), Sakiri (Toleski 85), Pandev.
Armenia: Ambartsumyan - Melikyan, Hovsepyan, Nazaryan, Sarkisyan, Vardanyan, Arman Karamian, Movsesian, R Hachatryan (Aleksanyan 46), A Petrosyan (Ara Hakopyan 65), K Dokhoyan (Tateosian 81). *Sent off: Vardanyan 69min.*

Aug 18 - Bucharest
Romania 2 (Mutu 50, F Petre 90)
Finland 1 (Eremenko pen 90)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Gilewski (Pol)
Romania: Lobont - Stoican (Iencsi 86), Baracuan, Ghionea, Rat, F Petre, Radoi, Dica (Soava 76), Caramarin (Cernat 46), Mutu, Danciulescu. *Sent off: Baracuan 78min.*
Finland: A Niemi - Pasanen (Koppinen 61), Kuivasto, Hyypia, Saarinen, Vayrynen, Riihilahti, Nurmela (Kopteff 84), Litmanen (Eremenko 59), Kolkka, Johansson. *Sent off: Vayrynen 83min.*

Sep 4 - Tampere
Finland 3 (Eremenko 42, 64, Riihilahti 58)
Andorra 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Siric (Cro)
Finland: A Niemi - Pasanen, Kuivasto, Hyypia, Pohja (Kopteff 59), Riihilahti, Nurmela, Litmanen (Johansson 73), Kolkka (Heikkinen 82), Eremenko, Forssell.
Andorra: Koldo - Ayala, Txema, Fernandez, A Lima, Sonejee, Pujol (Riera 90), Ruiz (Jimenez 69), Marin, J Sanchez (Silva 75), Sivera

Sep 4 - Craiova
Romania 2 (Pancu 15, Mutu 86)
Macedonia 1 (Vasoski 73)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 20,000. **Ref:** Plautz (Aut)
Romania: Lobont - Stoican, Iencsi, F Moldovan, Rat, F Petre, Soava, Pancu (Marica 63), Dica (Neaga 78), Mutu, Dancluescu (Cernat 46).
Macedonia: Milosevski - M Krstev (Bozinovski 46), Stojanoski, I Mitreski, Vasoski, Sumulikoski, A Mitreski, G Popov, Sakiri (Toleski 83), Jancevski, Pandev. *Sent off: Sumulikoski 89min.*

Sep 8 - Andorra La Vella
Andorra 1 (Pujol pen 30)
Romania 5 (Cernat 2, Pancu 5, 85, M Niculae 16, 72)
HT: 1-3. **Att:** 300. **Ref:** Kircher (Ger)
Andorra: Koldo - Txema, Fernandez (Jonas 74), I Lima, Bernaus, A Lima, Sivera, Pujol, Ayala (Jimenez 13), Ruiz Gonzalez, J Sanchez.
Romania: Lobont - Stoican, Baracuan, Iencsi, Rat, Caramarin (Paraschiv 83), Soava, Pancu, Cernat, Neaga (Marica 62), M Niculae (Dica 75).

Sep 8 - Yerevan
Armenia 0
Finland 2 (Forssell 23, Eremenko 68)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Malzinskas (Lit)
Armenia: Ambartsumyan - Melikyan, K Dokhoyan, Hovsepyan, Artur Mkrtchyan, R Hachatryan, A Petrosyan, Nazaryan (Aleksanyan 74), Sarkisyan (Manucharyan 54), Artavazd Karamian (Grigoryan 79), Movsesyan.
Finland: A Niemi - Pasanen, Hyypia, Vayrynen, Nurmela, Kuivasto, Kolkka (Pohja 85), Riihilahti, Litmanen (Lagerblom 46), Eremenko (Kopteff 74), Forssell.

Sep 8 - Amsterdam
Holland 2 (Van Hooijdonk 33, 84)
Czech Republic 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 50,000. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Holland: Van der Sar - Heitinga, Ooijer, Sneijder, De Jong, Van Bommel, Castelen (Makaay 74), Davids, Van Hooijdonk (Van Bronckhorst 86), Van der Vaart (Boulahrouz 64), Kuijt.
Czech Republic: Cech - Jiranek (Grygera 59), Bolf, Ujfalusi, Hubschman (Vachousek 62), Tyce (Lokvenc 76), Jankulovski, Heinz, Rosicky, Koller, Baros.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Romania	3	3	0	0	9	3	9
Finland	3	2	0	1	6	2	6
Macedonia	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Holland	1	1	0	0	2	0	3
Czech Republic	1	0	0	1	0	2	0
Armenia	2	0	0	2	0	5	0
Andorra	2	0	0	2	1	8	0

18.08.04 .....Macedonia-Armenia.....3-0
18.08.04 .....Romania-Finland.....2-1
04.09.04 .....Finland-Andorra 3-0
04.09.04 .....Romania-Macedonia 2-1
08.09.04 .....Andorra-Romania 1-5
08.09.04 .....Armenia-Finland.....0-2
08.09.04 .....Holland-Czech Republic 2-0
09.10.04 .....Czech Republic-Romania
09.10.04 .....Finland-Armenia
09.10.04 .....Macedonia-Holland
13.10.04 .....Andorra-Macedonia
13.10.04 .....Armenia-Czech Republic
13.10.04 .....Holland-Finland
17.11.04 .....Andorra-Holland
17.11.04 .....Armenia-Romania
17.11.04 .....Macedonia-Czech Republic
09.02.05 .....Macedonia-Andorra
26.03.05 .....Armenia-Andorra
26.03.05 .....Czech Republic-Finland
26.03.05 .....Romania-Holland
30.03.05 .....Andorra-Czech Republic
30.03.05 .....Holland-Armenia
30.03.05 .....Macedonia-Romania
04.06.05 .....Armenia-Macedonia
04.06.05 .....Czech Republic-Andorra
04.06.05 .....Holland-Romania
08.06.05 .....Czech Republic-Macedonia
08.06.05 .....Finland-Holland
08.06.05 .....Romania-Armenia
17.08.05 .....Macedonia-Finland
17.08.05 .....Romania-Andorra
03.09.05 .....Andorra-Finland
03.09.05 .....Armenia-Holland
03.09.05 .....Romania-Czech Republic
07.09.05 .....Czech Republic-Armenia
07.09.05 .....Finland-Macedonia
07.09.05 .....Holland-Andorra
08.10.05 .....Czech Republic-Holland
08.10.05 .....Finland-Romania
12.10.05 .....Andorra-Armenia
12.10.05 .....Finland-Czech Republic
12.10.05 .....Holland-Macedonia

Group 2

Sep 4 - Tirana
Albania 2 (Murati 2, Aliaj 11)
Greece 1 (Giannakopoulos 38)
HT: 2-1. **Att:** 15,800. **Ref:** Iturralde Gonzalez (Spa)
Albania: Strakosha - E Beqiri, Cana, Hasi, Murati, Aliaj, Skela, Lala, Myrtaj (Dragusha 76), Tare, K Duro (A Beqiri 86).
Greece: Nikopolidis - Seitaridis, Kapsis, Katsouranis, Fissas (Tsiartas 32), Basinas, Zagorakis, Karagounis, Ntampizas (Giannakopoulos 16), Vryzas (Papadopoulos 65), Haristeas.

Sep 4 - Copenhagen
Denmark 1 (Jorgensen 9)
Ukraine 1 (Husin 56)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 36,335. **Ref:** Meier (Swi)
Denmark: Sorensen - Bogelund (Priske 44), Kroldrup, N Jensen, Helveg, Poulsen (C Jensen 65), Gravesen, Gronkjaer, Tomasson, Jorgensen, Madsen (Pedersen 79).
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Starostyak, Rusol, Yeserskyi, Nesmachnyi, Shelaiev, Husin (Matiukhin 68), Tymoshchuk, Husiev (Zakarlyuka 76), Vorobei (Radchenko 84), Shevchenko.

Sep 4 - Trabzon
Turkey 1 (Fatih Tekke 49)
Georgia 1 (Asatiani 85)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 10,169. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Turkey: Rustu - Serkan, Deniz, Ibrahim Toraman, Emre Belozoglu, Umit Ozat, Okan Buruk, Hasan Sas, Tuncay (Gokdeniz 72), Fatih Tekke (Huseyin 72), Hakan Sukur (Nihat 79). *Sent off: Hasan Sas 58min.*
Georgia: Devadze - Mjavanadze, Kaladze, Khizaneishvili, Kvirkvelia, Tskitishvili, Dzhamarauli, S Arveladze, Khizanishvili (Kvaratskhelia 89), Rekhviashvili (Asatiani 79), Demetradze (Jakobia 74).

Sep 8 - Tbilisi
Georgia 2 (A Iashvili 15, Demetradze 90)
Albania 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 22,000. **Ref:** Courtney (NI)
Georgia: Devadze - Mjavanadze, Kaladze, Khizaneishvili, Salukvadze, Tskitishvili, A Iashvili, Dzhamarauli (Kvirkvelia 78), S Arveladze (Demetradze 88, Asatiani (Kankava 60), Kobiashvili.
Albania: Strakosha - E Beqiri, Hasi, Aliaj, Cana, Lala, K Duro (Dragusha 59), Murati (Shkembi 81), Myrtaj (Bushi 68), Tare, Skela. *Sent off: E Beqiri 82min.*

Sep 8 - Piraeus
Greece 0
Turkey 0
Ref: Frisk (Swe)
Greece: Nikopolidis - Seitaridis, Kapsis, Katsouranis, Fissas (Papadopoulos 80), Basinas, Zagorakis, Karagounis, Giannakopoulos (Tsiartas 80), Vryzas, Haristeas.
Turkey: Rustu - Ibrahim Toraman, Deniz, Servet, Emre Belozoglu, Umit Ozat, Okan Buruk (Huseyin 73), Gokdeniz, Fatih Tekke (Altintop 90), Serkan, Nihat (Serhat 90).

Sep 8 - Almaty
Kazakhstan 1 (Karpovits 35)
Ukraine 2 (Bielik 14, Rotan 90)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 23,500. **Ref:** Oliveira Alves Garcia (Por)
Kazakhstan: Novikov - Familtsev, Avdeev, Irismetov, Dubinsky, Smakov (Musin 72), Karpovits, Baltiyev, Chichulin (Uruzbakhtin 53), Nizovtsev, Tleshev (Radionov 63).
Ukraine: Shovkovskyi - Nesmachnyi, Rusol, Tymoshchuk, Yezerskyi, Zakarlyuka, Bielik (Shelaiev 90), Husin (Rotan 67), Husiev, Starostyak (Voronin 51), Vorobei.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Georgia	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Ukraine	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Albania	2	1	0	1	2	3	3
Turkey	2	0	2	0	1	1	2
Denmark	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Greece	2	0	1	1	1	2	1
Kazakhstan	1	0	0	1	1	2	0

04.09.04 .....Albania-Greece.....2-1
04.09.04 .....Denmark-Ukraine.....1-1
04.09.04 .....Turkey-Georgia.....1-1
08.09.04 .....Georgia-Albania.....2-0
08.09.04 .....Greece-Turkey.....0-0
08.09.04 .....Kazakhstan-Ukraine.....1-2
09.10.04 .....Albania-Denmark
09.10.04 .....Turkey-Kazakhstan
09.10.04 .....Ukraine-Greece
13.10.04 .....Denmark-Turkey
13.10.04 .....Kazakhstan-Albania
13.10.04 .....Ukraine-Georgia
17.11.04 .....Georgia-Denmark
17.11.04 .....Greece-Kazakhstan
17.11.04 .....Turkey-Ukraine
09.02.05 .....Albania-Ukraine
09.02.05 .....Greece-Denmark
26.03.05 .....Denmark-Kazakhstan
26.03.05 .....Georgia-Greece
26.03.05 .....Turkey-Albania
30.03.05 .....Georgia-Turkey
30.03.05 .....Greece-Albania
30.03.05 .....Ukraine-Denmark
04.06.05 .....Albania-Georgia
04.06.05 .....Turkey-Greece
04.06.05 .....Ukraine-Kazakhstan
08.06.05 .....Denmark-Albania
08.06.05 .....Greece-Ukraine
08.06.05 .....Kazakhstan-Turkey
17.08.05 .....Kazakhstan-Georgia
03.09.05 .....Albania-Kazakhstan
03.09.05 .....Georgia-Ukraine
03.09.05 .....Turkey-Denmark
07.09.05 .....Denmark-Georgia
07.09.05 .....Kazakhstan-Greece
07.09.05 .....Ukraine-Turkey
08.10.05 .....Denmark-Greece
08.10.05 .....Georgia-Kazakhstan
08.10.05 .....Ukraine-Albania
12.10.05 .....Albania-Turkey
12.10.05 .....Greece-Georgia
12.10.05 .....Kazakhstan-Denmark

Group 3

Aug 18 - Vaduz
Liechtenstein 1 (D'Elia 48)
Estonia 2 (Viikmae 31, Lindpere 80)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 750. **Ref:** Bozinovski (Mac)
Liechtenstein: Heeb - Telser, D Hasler, Michael Stocklasa, Ritter, R Beck (Rohrer 65), Martin Stocklasa, Gerster, D'Elia, T Beck (Vogt 80), M Frick. *Sent off: Ritter 24min, Gerster 90min.*
Estonia: Kotenko - Allas, Piiroja, U Rooba, Rahn, Jaager, Smirnov (Haavistu 66), Reim, Terehhov (Lindpere 60), Viikmae, Zahhovaiko (Teever 90).

Aug 18 - Bratislava
Slovakia 3 (Vittek 26, Gresko 48, Demo 89)
Luxembourg 1 (Strasser 2)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 5,000. **Ref:** Kassai (Hun)
Slovakia: Konig - Zabavnik, Kratochvil, Varga, Gresko, Janocko (Demo 68), Karhan, Mintal, Michalik (Cech 46), Vittek, S Nemeth (Sestak 84).
Luxembourg: Besic - Peters, Hoffmann, Schauls, Reiter, A Leweck (Mannon 61), Cardoni, Strasser, Braun (Molitor 61), Remy, Huss (C Leweck 74).

Sep 4 - Tallinn
Estonia 4 (Teever 7, Schauls og 41, Oper 61, Viikmae 66)
Luxembourg 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 4,500. **Ref:** Kelly (Ire)
Estonia: Poom - Allas, Jaager, Piiroja, U Rooba, Rahn, Teever, Reim (Leetma 74), Viikmae, Zahhovaiko (Oper 46), Lindpere (Klavan 62).
Luxembourg: Besic - Peters, Reiter (Hellenbrand 90), Hoffmann, Strasser, Remy, Schauls, A Leweck, Braun (C Leweck 67), Cardoni (Di Domenico 81), Huss. *Sent off: Huss 34min.*

Sep 4 - Riga
Latvia 0
Portugal 2 (Cristiano Ronaldo 58, Pauleta 59)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 9,500. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Latvia: Kolinko - Isakovs, Zemlinskis, Stepanovs, Bleidelis, Astafjevs, Lobanovs, Laizans, Rubins, Verpakovskis, Prohorenkovs (Rimkus 77).
Portugal: Ricardo - Paulo Ferreira, Jorge Andrade, Ricardo Carvalho, Nuno Valente (Caneira 74), Costinha, Maniche, Deco, Cristiano Ronaldo (Petit 83), Simao (Boa Morte 68), Pauleta.

Sep 4 - Moscow
Russia 1 (Bulykin 14)
Slovakia 1 (Vittek 87)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 11,500. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Russia: Malafeyev - Anyukov, Sharonov, Smertin, Kolodine, Alenichev, Evseev (Sennikov 46), Khokhlov (Boyarintsev 66), Kerzhakov, Karyaka, Bulykin.
Slovakia: Contofalsky - Gresko, Kratochvil, Varga, Karhan, Mintal, Zabavnik, Michalik (Cech 76), Hanek (Reiter 83), S Nemeth (Breska 76), Vittek.

Sep 8 - Luxembourg
Luxembourg 3 (Braun 11, A Leweck 55, Cardoni 62)
Latvia 4 (Verpakovskis 4, Zemlinskis pen 40, Hoffmann og 65, Prohorenkovs 67)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 2,000. **Ref:** Kasnaferis (Gre)
Luxembourg: Besic - Peters (Di Domenico 90), Hellenbrand, Hoffmann, Strasser, Remy, Schauls, A Leweck (Collette 87), Braun (C Leweck 76), Cardoni, Molitor.
Latvia: Kolinko - Stepanovs, Astafjevs, Zemlinskis, Laizans, Lobanovs, Isakovs, Bleidelis (Prohorenkovs 32), Rimkus (Semjonovs 63), Rubins, Verpakovskis.

Sep 8 - Leiria
Portugal 4 (Cristiano Ronaldo 75, Helder Postiga 84, 90, Pauleta 87)
Estonia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 27,214. **Ref:** Demirlek (Tur)
Portugal: Ricardo - Paulo Ferreira, Ricardo Carvalho, Jorge Andrade, Rui Jorge (Miguel 57), Costinha, Maniche (Helder Postiga 46), Cristiano Ronaldo, Deco, Simao (Boa Morte 71), Pauleta.
Estonia: Poom - Allas, Jaager, Piiroja, U Rooba (Klavan 46), Leetma, Teever (Viikmae 64), Reim, Oper, Lindpere, Terehhov (Zahhovaiko 72).

Sep 8 - Bratislava
Slovakia 7 (Vittek 15, 59, pen 81, Karhan 41, S Nemeth 84, Mintal 85, Zabavnik 90)
Liechtenstein 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 5,620. **Ref:** Delevic (Ser)
Slovakia: Contofalsky - Gresko (Breska 62), Hanek, Kratochvil (Petras 46), Demo (Janocko 46), Karhan, Mintal, S Nemeth, Cech, Zabavnik, Vittek.
Liechtenstein: Heeb - Telser, Vogt, D'Elia, P Burgmeier, Martin Stocklasa, R Beck, M Buchel (Alabor 76), T Beck, M Frick, Rohrer (C Frick 71).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Slovakia	3	2	1	0	11	2	7
Portugal	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Estonia	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Latvia	2	1	0	1	4	5	3
Russia	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Luxembourg	3	0	0	3	4	11	0
Liechtenstein	2	0	0	2	1	9	0

18.08.04 .....Liechtenstein-Estonia 1-2
18.08.04 .....Slovakia-Luxembourg 3-1
04.09.04 .....Estonia-Luxembourg 4-0
04.09.04 .....Latvia-Portugal.....0-2
04.09.04 .....Russia-Slovakia 1-1
08.09.04 .....Luxembourg-Latvia 3-4
08.09.04 .....Portugal-Estonia.....4-0
08.09.04 .....Slovakia-Liechtenstein.....7-0

09.10.04 .....Liechtenstein-Portugal
09.10.04 .....Luxembourg-Russia
09.10.04 .....Slovakia-Latvia
13.10.04 .....Latvia-Estonia
13.10.04 .....Luxembourg-Liechtenstein
13.10.04 .....Portugal-Russia
17.11.04 .....Liechtenstein-Latvia
17.11.04 .....Luxembourg-Portugal
17.11.04 .....Russia-Estonia
26.03.05 .....Estonia-Slovakia
26.03.05 .....Liechtenstein-Russia
30.03.05 .....Estonia-Russia
30.03.05 .....Latvia-Luxembourg
30.03.05 .....Slovakia-Portugal
04.06.05 .....Estonia-Liechtenstein
04.06.05 .....Portugal-Slovakia
04.06.05 .....Russia-Latvia
08.06.05 .....Estonia-Portugal
08.06.05 .....Latvia-Liechtenstein
08.06.05 .....Luxembourg-Slovakia
17.08.05 .....Latvia-Russia
17.08.05 .....Liechtenstein-Slovakia
03.09.05 .....Estonia-Latvia
03.09.05 .....Portugal-Luxembourg
03.09.05 .....Russia-Liechtenstein
07.09.05 .....Latvia-Slovakia
07.09.05 .....Liechtenstein-Luxembourg
07.09.05 .....Russia-Portugal
08.10.05 .....Portugal-Liechtenstein
08.10.05 .....Russia-Luxembourg
08.10.05 .....Slovakia-Estonia
12.10.05 .....Luxembourg-Estonia
12.10.05 .....Portugal-Latvia
12.10.05 .....Slovakia-Russia

Group 4

Sep 4 - Saint-Denis
France 0
Israel 0
Att: 43,526. **Ref:** Temmink (Hol)
France: Coupet - Gallas, Squillaci, Givet, Mendy (Giuly 57), Makelele, Vieira, Rothen (Pires 65), Evra, Henry, Saha.
Israel: Davidovich - Ben-Haim, Saban, Antebi (Keisi 12), Benado, Afek (Gazal 70), Badir, Katan, Benayoun (Nimni 79), Golan, Tal.

Sep 4 - Dublin
Rep Ireland 3 (Morrison 33, A Reid 38, Robbie Keane pen 55)
Cyprus 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Paniashvili (Geo)
Rep Ireland: Given - Carr (Finnan 70), Cunningham, O'Brien, O'Shea (Maybury 83), A Reid, Kavanagh, Kilbane, Duff, Morrison (Lee 81), Robbie Keane.
Cyprus: N Panayiotou - Okkarides, Kakogiannis, Lambrou, Theodotou, Makrides, Charalambidis (Yiasoumi 70), Satsias, Charalambous (Elia 65), M Constantinou, Okkas (Krassas 78).

Sep 4 - Basle
Switzerland 6 (Vonlanthen 10, 14, 56, Rey 29, 44, 55)
Faroe Islands 0
HT: 4-0. **Att:** 13,000. **Ref:** Tudor (Rom)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Haas, M Yakin, Muller, Spycher (Magnin 46), Cabanas (Huggel 63), Vogel, Wicky, H Yakin, Vonlanthen, Rey (Haberli 75).
Faroe Islands: Knudsen - Thorsteinsson, Johannesen, Jon R Jacobsen, Olsen, a Borg (Danielsen 64), Johnsson, Benjaminsen, Jorgensen (Hansen 70), Frederiksberg, Petersen (Rogvi Jacobsen 57).

Sep 8 - Torshavn
Faroe Islands 0
France 2 (Giuly 37, Cisse 73)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Thomson (Sco)
Faroe Islands: Mikkelsen - Thorsteinsson, Johannesen, Jon R Jacobsen, Olsen, a Borg, J Johnsson, Benjaminsen, Jorgensen (Danielsen 83), Rogvi Jacobsen (av Flotum 83), Frederiksberg (John Petersen 75).
France: Coupet - Gallas, Squillaci, Givet, Evra, Giuly, Pedretti, Vieira, Pires, Saha (Cisse 9), Henry (Dhorasoo 64). *Sent off: Vieira 55min.*

Sep 8 - Tel Aviv
Israel 2 (Benayoun 64, Badir 74)
Cyprus 1 (M Constantinou 58)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,000. **Ref:** Shmolik (Bls)
Israel: Davidovich - Saban, Benado, Ben-Haim, Keisi, Badir, Tal (Afek 71), Nimni (Balili 57), Benayoun, Katan (Gazal 83), Golan.
Cyprus: N Panayiotou - Theodotou (Georgiou 30), Nicolaou, Okkaridis, Lambrou, Satsias, Charalambidis (Michael 75), Makrides, Okkas (Yiasoumi 79), M Constantinou, Avgousti.

Sep 8 - Basle
Switzerland 1 (H Yakin 17)
Rep Ireland 1 (Morrison 8)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Vassaras (Gre)
Switzerland: Zuberbuhler - Haas, Muller, M Yakin, Magnin, Cabanas, Vogel, H Yakin, Barnetta, Vonlanthen (Lonfat 72), Rey.
Rep Ireland: Given - Carr, O'Brien, Cunningham, Finnan, A Reid (Kavanagh 72), Roy Keane, Kilbane, Duff, Morrison (Doherty 84), Robbie Keane.

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	2	1	1	0	7	1	4
Rep Ireland	2	1	1	0	4	1	4
France	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
Israel	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Cyprus	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
Faroe Islands	2	0	0	2	0	8	0

04.09.04 .....France-Israel 0-0
04.09.04 .....Rep Ireland-Cyprus 3-0
04.09.04 .....Switzerland-Faroe Islands 6-0
08.09.04 .....Faroe Islands-France 0-2
08.09.04 .....Israel-Cyprus 2-1
08.09.04 .....Switzerland-Rep Ireland.....1-1
09.10.04 .....Cyprus-Faroe Islands
09.10.04 .....France-Rep Ireland
09.10.04 .....Israel-Switzerland
13.10.04 .....Cyprus-France
13.10.04 .....Rep Ireland-Faroe Islands
17.11.04 .....Cyprus-Israel
26.03.05 .....Israel-Rep Ireland
26.03.05 .....France-Switzerland
30.03.05 .....Israel-France
30.03.05 .....Switzerland-Cyprus
04.06.05 .....Faroe Islands-Switzerland
04.06.05 .....Rep Ireland-Israel
08.06.05 .....Faroe Islands-Rep Ireland
17.08.05 .....Faroe Islands-Cyprus
03.09.05 .....France-Faroe Islands
03.09.05 .....Switzerland-Israel
07.09.05 .....Cyprus-Switzerland
07.09.05 .....Faroe Islands-Israel
07.09.05 .....Rep Ireland-France
08.10.05 .....Cyprus-Rep Ireland
08.10.05 .....Switzerland-France
08.10.05 .....Israel-Faroe Islands
12.10.05 .....France-Cyprus
12.10.05 .....Rep Ireland-Switzerland

Group 5

Sep 4 - Palermo
Italy 2 (De Rossi 4, Toni 80)
Norway 1 (Carew 1)
HT: 1-1. **Att:** 21,463. **Ref:** Sars (Fra)
Italy: Buffon - Bonera, Nesta, Materazzi, Favalli (Diana 69), Fiore, Gattuso, De Rossi, Zambrotta, Miccoli (Toni 74), Gilardino (Corradi 59).
Norway: E Johnsen - Basma, Riseth, Lundekvam, Riise, Andresen, Hoseth (Solli 90), Sorensen (Gamst Pedersen 87), Rudi, F Johnsen, Carew (Rushfeldt 75).

Sep 4 - Celje
Slovenia 3 (Acimovic 5, 27, 48)
Moldova 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 3,620. **Ref:** Hyytia (Fin)
Slovenia: B Mavric - Komac (Tanjic 74), Karic, M Mavric, Knavs, Pokorn (Sukalo 86), N Ceh (Koren 89), Siljak, Seslar, Dedic, Acimovic.
Moldova: Hmaruc - Lascencov, Olexici, Catinsus, Priganiuc, Covaliciuc, Cebotari, Miterev, Covalenco (Ivanov 71), Savinov (Lungu 46), Rogaciov (Dadu 82).

Sep 8 - Chisinau
Moldova 0
Italy 1 (Del Piero 32)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Benes (Cze)
Moldova: Hmaruc - Lascencov, Catinsus, Priganiuc, Bursuc, Olexici, Lungu, Ivanov, Covaliciuc, Rogaciov (Cebotari 81), Miterev (Dadu 63). *Sent off: Dadu 77min.*
Italy: Buffon - Bonera (Blasi 84), Nesta, Materazzi, Zambrotta, Gattuso, Pirlo, Ambrosini (Oddo 73), Diana, Del Piero, Gilardino (Toni 80).

Sep 8 - Oslo
Norway 1 (Riseth 38)
Belarus 1 (Kutuzov 77)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,272. **Ref:** Gomes Costa (Por)
Norway: Myhre - Holland, Riseth, Lundekvam, Riise, Andresen, Hoseth, Rudi (Sorensen 46), F Johnsen, Gamst Pedersen, Rushfeldt (Carew 81).
Belarus: Khomutovsky - Kulchy, Yaskovich, Omelyanchuk, Shtanyuk, Gurenko, Lavrik, Bulyga (Saschenko 63), Romaschenko, V Hleb (Blizniuk 44; Sutskov 90), Kutuzov.

Sep 8 - Glasgow
Scotland 0
Slovenia 0
Att: 38,278. **Ref:** Larsen (Den)
Scotland: Gordon - G Caldwell, Webster, Mackay, Naysmith (Holt 58), McNamara, Fletcher, Ferguson, Quashie, McFadden, Dickov (Crawford 76).
Slovenia: B Mavric - Pokorn, M Mavric, Knavs, Karic, Komac, Seslar, N Ceh, Acimovic, Siljak (Lavric 64), Dedic (Sukalo 79).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Italy	2	2	0	0	3	1	6
Slovenia	2	1	1	0	3	0	4
Belarus	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Scotland	1	0	1	0	0	0	1
Norway	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Moldova	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

04.09.04 .....Italy-Norway.....2-1
04.09.04 .....Slovenia-Moldova.....3-0
08.09.04 .....Moldova-Italy 0-1
08.09.04 .....Norway-Belarus 1-1
08.09.04 .....Scotland-Slovenia 0-0
09.10.04 .....Belarus-Moldova
09.10.04 .....Scotland-Norway
09.10.04 .....Slovenia-Italy
13.10.04 .....Italy-Belarus
13.10.04 .....Moldova-Scotland
13.10.04 .....Norway-Slovenia
26.03.05 .....Italy-Scotland
30.03.05 .....Moldova-Norway
30.03.05 .....Slovenia-Belarus
04.06.05 .....Belarus-Slovenia
04.06.05 .....Norway-Italy
04.06.05 .....Scotland-Moldova
08.06.05 .....Belarus-Scotland
03.09.05 .....Moldova-Belarus
03.09.05 .....Scotland-Italy
03.09.05 .....Slovenia-Norway
07.09.05 .....Belarus-Italy
07.09.05 .....Moldova-Slovenia
07.09.05 .....Norway-Scotland
08.10.05 .....Italy-Slovenia
08.10.05 .....Norway-Moldova
08.10.05 .....Scotland-Belarus
12.10.05 .....Belarus-Norway
12.10.05 .....Italy-Moldova
12.10.05 .....Slovenia-Scotland

Group 6

Sep 4 - Vienna
Austria 2 (Kollmann 71, Ivanschitz 74)
England 2 (Lampard 24, Gerrard 65)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 48,500. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Austria: Manninger - Standfest, Martin Hiden, Stranzl, Pogatetz, Aufhauser (Kiesenebner 74), Sick, Kuhbauer, Ivanschitz, Haas (Hieblinger 89), Glieder (Kollmann 68).
England: James - G Neville, Terry, King, A Cole, Beckham, Gerrard (Carragher 82), Lampard, Bridge (J Cole 84), Smith (Defoe 76), Owen.

Sep 4 - Baku
Azerbaijan 1 (Sadigov 55)
Wales 1 (Speed 47)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 8,000. **Ref:** Trivkovic (Cro)
Azerbaijan: Kramarenko - E Agaev, Hajiyev, Shukurov, M Gurbanov, A Kerimov, G Gurbanov, Sadigov, Huseinov (I Mamedov 73), S Aliyev (Nabiyev 71), Ponomarev (I Gurbanov 83).
Wales: P Jones - Delaney, Gabbidon, Melville, Page, Savage, Speed, Pembridge (Oster 46), Koumas (Earnshaw 88), Bellamy, Hartson.

Sep 4 - Belfast
Northern Ireland 0
Poland 3 (Zurawski 4, Wlodarczyk 37, Krzynowek 57)
HT: 0-2. **Att:** 14,000. **Ref:** Wegereef (Hol)
N Ireland: Taylor - A Hughes, Craigan, Williams, Capaldi, Johnson, M Hughes (Jones 53), Whitley, Elliott (McVeigh 62), Healy, Quinn (Smith 73).
Poland: Dudek - Michal Zewlakow, J Bak, Glowacki, Rzasa, Krzynowek (Gorawski 67), M Lewandowski, Mila (Radomski 76), Zienczuk, Zurawski (Kryszalowicz 84), Wlodarczyk. *Sent off: Wlodarczyk 79min.*

Sep 8 - Vienna
Austria 2 (Stranzl 23, Kollmann 44)
Azerbaijan 0
HT: 2-0. **Att:** 26,400. **Ref:** Sammut (Mlt)
Austria: Manninger - Standfest, Stranzl, Martin Hiden, Pogatetz, Aufhauser, Kuhbauer, Ivanschitz, Haas (Glieder 72), Schopp (Dollinger 57), Kollmann (Linz 79).
Azerbaijan: Kramarenko - Agaev, Hajiyev, Shukurov, Huseinov, A Kerimov, G Gurbanov, Sadigov, M Gurbanov (I Mamedov 46), Ponomarev (Nabiyev 46), S Aliyev (I Gurbanov 46).

Sep 8 - Chorzow
Poland 1 (Zurawski 48)
England 2 (Defoe 37, Glowacki og 58)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 48,000. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)
Poland: Dudek - Michal Zewlakow, J Bak, Glowacki, Rzasa, Kosowski (Gorawski 80), Zurawski, M Lewandowski, Mila (Kukielka 59), Krzynowek, Rasiak (Niedzielan 69).
England: Robinson - G Neville (Carragher 32), Terry, King, A Cole, Beckham (Hargreaves 89), Gerrard, Lampard, Bridge, Owen, Defoe (Dyer 87).

Sep 8 - Cardiff
Wales 2 (Hartson 32, Earnshaw 75)
Northern Ireland 2 (Whitley 11, Healy 21)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 63,500. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)
Wales: P Jones - Delaney (Earnshaw 28), Collins, Gabbidon, Thatcher (Parry 63), Oster, Savage, Speed, Koumas, Hartson, Bellamy. *Sent off: Savage 9min.*
N Ireland: Taylor - Clyde, A Hughes, Williams, Murdock, Capaldi (McCartney 90), Whitley, M Hughes, Johnson, Quinn (Smith 57; McVeigh 89), Healy. *Sent off: M Hughes 9min, Healy 21min.*

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Austria	2	1	1	0	4	2	4
England	2	1	1	0	4	3	4
Poland	2	1	0	1	4	2	3
Wales	2	0	2	0	3	3	2
Azerbaijan	2	0	1	1	1	3	1
N Ireland	2	0	1	1	2	5	1

04.09.04 .....Austria-England.....2-2
04.09.04 .....Azerbaijan-Wales 1-1
04.09.04 .....Northern Ireland-Poland.....0-3
08.09.04 .....Austria-Azerbaijan.....2-0
08.09.04 .....Poland-England.....1-2
08.09.04 .....Wales-Northern Ireland.....2-2
09.10.04 .....Austria-Poland
09.10.04 .....Azerbaijan-Northern Ireland
09.10.04 .....England-Wales
13.10.04 .....Azerbaijan-England
13.10.04 .....Northern Ireland-Austria
13.10.04 .....Wales-Poland
26.03.05 .....England-Northern Ireland
26.03.05 .....Poland-Azerbaijan
26.03.05 .....Wales-Austria
30.03.05 .....Austria-Wales
30.03.05 .....England-Azerbaijan
30.03.05 .....Poland-Northern Ireland
04.06.05 .....Azerbaijan-Poland
03.09.05 .....Northern Ireland-Azerbaijan
03.09.05 .....Poland-Austria
03.09.05 .....Wales-England
07.09.05 .....Azerbaijan-Austria
07.09.05 .....Northern Ireland-England
07.09.05 .....Poland-Wales

08.10.05 .....England-Austria
08.10.05 .....Northern Ireland-Wales
12.10.05 .....Austria-Northern Ireland
12.10.05 .....England-Poland
12.10.05 .....Wales-Azerbaijan

Group 7

Sep 4 - Charleroi
Belgium 1 (Sonck 61)
Lithuania 1 (Jankauskas 72)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Loizou (Cyp)
Belgium: Peersman - Deflandre (Kompany 46), Simons, Van Buyten, Dheedene, Clement, Goor, M Mpenza (Dufer 22), Vreven (Pieroni 73), Sonck, Buffel.
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Stankevicius, Dziaukstas, Barasa, Skerla, Skarbalius (Morinas 9), Vencevicius (Razanauskas 58), E Cesnauskis, Danilevicius (Mikoliunas 66), Poskus, Jankauskas.

Sep 4 - Serravalle
San Marino 0
Serbia & Montenegro 3 (Vukic 4, Jestrovic 15, 82)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Kholmatov (Kaz)
San Marino: F Gasperoni - C Valentini, Marani, Bacciocchi, Delle Valle, Crescentini (Moretti 46), Domeniconi, Gasperoni (Maiani 84), Ciacci, Vannucci, Ugolini (Montagna 24).
Serbia & Montenegro: Jevric - Gavrancic, Vidic, Krstajic, Koroman, Mladenovic (Duljaj 81), Dragutinovic, Stankovic, Vukic (N Brnovic 85), Milosevic (Kezman 68), Jestrovic.

Sep 8 - Zenica
Bosnia-Herzegovina 1 (Bolic 73)
Spain 1 (Vicente 66)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,000. **Ref:** De Santis (Ita)
Bosnia-Herzegovina: Hasagic - Salihamidzic, Bajic, Spahic, Music, Grujic, Barbarez, Beslija, Baljic (Blatnjak 63), Misimovic, Bolic (Halilovic 83).
Spain: Casillas - Michel Salgado, Puyol, Ivan Helguera, Romero, Victor (Morientes 50), Albelda (Xabi Alonso 71), Baraja (Valeron 58), Vicente, Reyes, Raul.

Sep 8 - Kaunas
Lithuania 4 (Jankauskas 18, 49, Danilevicius 63, Gedgaudas 89)
San Marino 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 15,000. **Ref:** Jareci (Alb)
Lithuania: Karcemarskas - Stankevicius, Dziaukstas, Barasa, Skerla, Mikoliunas (Gedgaudas 74), Vencevicius, E Cesnauskis (Morinas 46), Danilevicius, Poskus, Jankauskas (Radzinevicius 68).
San Marino: F Gasperoni - C Valentini, Michele Marani, S Bacciocchi, Della Valle, Albani (Maiani 87), Domeniconi, A Gasperoni, Gacchi, Vannucci (Nanni 82), P Montagna (M Moretti 65).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Lithuania	2	1	1	0	5	1	4
Serbia & M'negro	1	1	0	0	3	0	3
Belgium	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Bosnia-Herz	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
Spain	1	0	1	0	1	1	1
San Marino	2	0	0	2	0	7	0

04.09.04 .....Belgium-Lithuania.....1-1
04.09.04 .....San Marino-Serbia & M'negro.....0-3
08.09.04 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Spain.....1-1
08.09.04 .....Lithuania-San Marino.....4-0
09.10.04 .....Bosnia-Herz.-Serbia & M'negro
09.10.04 .....Spain-Belgium
13.10.04 .....Lithuania-Spain
13.10.04 .....Serbia & M'negro-San Marino
17.11.04 .....Belgium-Serbia & M'negro
17.11.04 .....San Marino-Lithuania
09.02.05 .....Spain-San Marino
26.03.05 .....Belgium-Bosnia-Herzegovina
30.03.05 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Lithuania
30.03.05 .....San Marino-Belgium
30.03.05 .....Serbia & M'negro-Spain
04.06.05 .....San Marino-Bosnia-Herzegovina
04.06.05 .....Serbia & M'negro-Belgium
04.06.05 .....Spain-Lithuania
08.06.05 .....Spain-Bosnia-Herzegovina
03.09.05 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-Belgium
03.09.05 .....Serbia & M'negro-Lithuania
07.09.05 .....Belgium-San Marino
07.09.05 .....Lithuania-Bosnia-Herzegovina
07.09.05 .....Spain-Serbia & M'negro
08.10.05 .....Belgium-Spain
08.10.05 .....Bosnia-Herzegovina-San Marino
08.10.05 .....Lithuania-Serbia & M'negro
12.10.05 .....Lithuania-Belgium
12.10.05 .....San Marino-Spain
12.10.05 .....Serbia & M'negro-Bosnia-Herz.

Group 8

Sep 4 - Zagreb
Croatia 3 (Prso 32, Klasnic 57, Gyepes og 80)
Hungary 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 25,000. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Croatia: Butina - R Kovac, Tudor, Simunic, Srna (Mornar 85), Vranjes, Kranjcar (J Leko 78), N Kovac, Babic, Prso (Olic 75), Klasnic.
Hungary: Kiraly - Juhasz, Stark (Gyepes 60), A Toth (P Kovacs 81), Bodnar, Rosa, Molnar, Huszti, Simek (Low 18), Szabics, Gera. *Sent off: Huszti 11min.*

Sep 4 - Reykjavik
Iceland 1 (E Gudjohnsen pen 50)
Bulgaria 3 (Berbatov 34, 48, Yanev 61)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 5,014. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Iceland: Arason - K O Sigurdsson, O O Bjarnason, Hreidarsson, T Gudjonsson, Gretarsson (J K Gudjonsson 57), B Gunnarsson, Einarsson, I Sigurdsson (Vidarsson 63), H Helguson (H Sigurdsson 69), E Gudjohnsen. *Sent off: B Gunnarsson 83min.*
Bulgaria: Ivankov - Kishishev, Kirilov, Stoyanov, I Petkov, Hristov, Stilian Petrov, Lazarov (Yanev 41), Bojinov (Bukharev 71), Yankov (Kamburov 79), Berbatov.

Sep 4 - Valletta
Malta 0
Sweden 7 (Ibrahimovic 4, 11, 14, 71, Ljungberg 46, 74, Larsson 77)
HT: 0-3. **Ref:** Jakov (Isr)
Malta: M Muscat - Briffa, Azzopardi, Pullicino, Said, Dimech, Woods (Mallia 78), Giglio, Mifsud, Ganea, Zahra (Cohen 57).
Sweden: Isaksson - Lucic, Mellberg (M Nilsson 62), P Hansson, Edman (Ostlund 49), Linderoth, Wilhelmsson (M Jonson 78), A Svensson, Ljungberg, Ibrahimovic, Larsson.

Sep 8 - Budapest
Hungary 3 (Gera 62, Torghelle 76, Szabics 80)
Iceland 2 (E Gudjohnsen 40, I Sigurdsson 78)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 6,000. **Ref:** Ovrebo (Nor)
Hungary: Kiraly - Juhasz, Gyepes, A Toth, Szelesi (Szabics 46), Molnar, Rosa, Bodnar, Simek (Low 90), Gera, P Kovacs (Torghelle 66).
Iceland: Arason - K O Sigurdsson, O O Bjarnason, Hreidarsson, T Gudjonsson (Einarsson 75), Gretarsson (V Gunnarsson 86), J K Gudjonsson, Vidarsson, I Sigurdsson, H Helguson, E Gudjohnsen (H Sigurdsson 86).

Sep 8 - Gothenburg
Sweden 0
Croatia 1 (Srna 63)
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 40,023. **Ref:** Dauden Ibanez (Spa)
Sweden: Isaksson - Ostlund, Mellberg, Lucic (Allback 80), Edman, Linderoth, Wilhelmsson, A Svensson (M Jonson 73), Ljungberg, Ibrahimovic, Larsson.
Croatia: Butina - R Kovac, Tudor, Simunic, Srna, Vranjes, Kranjcar (J Leko 63), N Kovac, Babic, Prso (Tokic 90), Klasnic (Olic 46).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	2	2	0	0	4	0	6
Sweden	2	1	0	1	7	1	3
Bulgaria	1	1	0	0	3	1	3
Hungary	2	1	0	1	3	5	3
Iceland	2	0	0	2	3	6	0
Malta	1	0	0	1	0	7	0

04.09.04 .....Croatia-Hungary.....3-0
04.09.04 .....Iceland-Bulgaria.....1-3
04.09.04 .....Malta-Sweden.....0-7
08.09.04 .....Hungary-Iceland.....3-2
08.09.04 .....Sweden-Croatia.....0-1
09.10.04 .....Croatia-Bulgaria
09.10.04 .....Malta-Iceland
09.10.04 .....Sweden-Hungary
13.10.04 .....Bulgaria-Malta
13.10.04 .....Iceland-Sweden
17.11.04 .....Malta-Hungary
26.03.05 .....Bulgaria-Sweden
26.03.05 .....Croatia-Iceland
30.03.05 .....Croatia-Malta
30.03.05 .....Hungary-Bulgaria
04.06.05 .....Bulgaria-Croatia
04.06.05 .....Iceland-Hungary
04.06.05 .....Sweden-Malta
08.06.05 .....Iceland-Malta
03.09.05 .....Hungary-Malta
03.09.05 .....Iceland-Croatia
03.09.05 .....Sweden-Bulgaria
07.09.05 .....Bulgaria-Iceland
07.09.05 .....Hungary-Sweden
07.09.05 .....Malta-Croatia
08.10.05 .....Bulgaria-Hungary
08.10.05 .....Croatia-Sweden
12.10.05 .....Hungary-Croatia
12.10.05 .....Malta-Bulgaria
12.10.05 .....Sweden-Iceland

Group winners and the two best runners-up qualify for finals. The other six runners-up are paired in three two-leg play-off matches, the winners of which also qualify for finals

OCEANIA

0.5 finals berths

3rd stage

Australia and the Solomon Islands meet in a two-leg play-off in September 2005, the winners of which meet the fifth-placed South American team over two legs for a place in finals

SOUTH AMERICA

4.5 finals berths

Sep 4 - Lima
Peru 1 (Jorge Soto 62)
Argentina 3 (Rosales 14, Coloccini 66, Sorin 90)
HT: 0-1. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Simon (Bra)
Peru: Ibanez - Acasiete, Vilchez, Solano, Jayo, Mendoza (Maestri 16), Palacios (Olcese 75), Salas, Farfan, Galliquio, Jorge Soto (J Garcia 76). *Sent off: Maestri 45min.*
Argentina: Abbondanzieri - G Milito, Coloccini, Mascherano, Heinze, Rosales, Zanetti, D'Alessandro (D Milito 63), Tevez (Medina 83), Kily Gonzalez, C Delgado (Sorin 69). *Sent off: Kily Gonzalez 45min.*

Sep 5 - Sao Paulo
Brazil 3 (Ronaldo 1, Ronaldinho pen 12, Adriano 44)
Bolivia 1 (Cristaldo 48)
HT: 3-0. **Att:** 60,000. **Ref:** Baldassi (Arg)
Brazil: Julio Cesar - Belletti, Edmilson, Roque Junior, Roberto Carlos, Gilberto Silva, Edu (Robinho 73), Juninho Pernambucano (Renato 60), Ronaldinho (Alex 60), Adriano, Ronaldo.
Bolivia: J M Pena - Alvarez, O Sanchez, Cristaldo, Colque (Tufino 46), L Gutierrez (Coimbra 76), Pizarro, Raldes, Botero, Fernandez, Ribeiro (Arana 46).

Sep 5 - Santiago
Chile 0
Colombia 0
Att: 62,523. **Ref:** Souza (Bra)
Chile: N Tapia - Acuna, Navia (Salas 46), Maldonado, R Perez, Villarroel, Pinilla, Olarra, Fuentes, Mirosevic (Tello 59), Pizarro (Valenzuela 59). *Sent off: Maldonado 17min, R Perez 70min.*
Colombia: Calero - I Cordoba, Yepes, Vargas, Viafara, Preciado (Murillo 65), Perea, Hernandez (Patino 55), Castillo, Bedoya, Oviedo (Diaz 87). *Sent off: Viafara 17min, Patino 70min.*

Sep 5 - Asuncion
Paraguay 1 (Gamarra 52)
Venezuela 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 30,000. **Ref:** Mendez (Uru)
Paraguay: Villar - Sarabia, J C Caceres, Gamarra (Manzur 82), Gavilan (Barreto 77), Paredes, Da Silva, Enciso, Cuevas, Santa Cruz, Cardozo (Ramirez 57).
Venezuela: Angelucci - Vallenilla, Rey, Cichero, L Vera, Paez (Rondon 67), Jimenez, Rojas, Arango, Urdaneta (H Gonzalez 70), Castellin (Moreno 76).

Sep 5 - Montevideo
Uruguay 1 (Bueno 57)
Ecuador 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 28,000. **Ref:** Hidalgo (Per)
Uruguay: Viera - Bizera, Dario Rodriguez, Montero, Sosa, C Rodriguez (Estoyanoff 61), Recoba (Perez 78), Delgado, Diogo, Bueno, D Silva (Sanchez 24).
Ecuador: Villafuerte - I Hurtado, De la Cruz, G Espinoza, Reasco, Soledispa (Quinonez 70), Mendez, M Ayovi, W Ayovi (Valencia 82), C Tenorio, Baldeon (Delgado 59).

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	8	4	4	0	14	8	16
Argentina	8	4	3	1	14	7	15
Paraguay	8	4	2	2	10	8	14
Chile	8	3	3	2	9	7	12
Ecuador	8	3	1	4	8	8	10
Venezuela	8	3	1	4	6	8	10
Uruguay	8	3	1	4	13	19	10
Peru	8	2	3	3	10	10	9
Colombia	8	2	2	4	10	10	8
Bolivia	8	2	0	6	10	19	6

06.09.03 .....Argentina-Chile 2-2
06.09.03 .....Ecuador-Venezuela 2-0
06.09.03 .....Peru-Paraguay 4-1
07.09.03 .....Colombia-Brazil.....1-2
07.09.03 .....Uruguay-Bolivia.....5-0
09.09.03 .....Chile-Peru 2-1
09.09.03 .....Venezuela-Argentina 0-3
10.09.03 .....Bolivia-Colombia 4-0
10.09.03 .....Brazil-Ecuador.....1-0
10.09.03 .....Paraguay-Uruguay 4-1
15.11.03 .....Argentina-Bolivia.....3-0
15.11.03 .....Colombia-Venezuela 0-1
15.11.03 .....Paraguay-Ecuador.....2-1
15.11.03 .....Uruguay-Chile 2-1
16.11.03 .....Peru-Brazil 1-1
18.11.03 .....Chile-Paraguay.....0-1
18.11.03 .....Venezuela-Bolivia.....2-1
19.11.03 .....Brazil-Uruguay 3-3
19.11.03 .....Colombia-Argentina 1-1
19.11.03 .....Ecuador-Peru 0-0
30.03.04 .....Argentina-Ecuador 1-0
30.03.04 .....Bolivia-Chile 0-2
31.03.04 .....Paraguay-Brazil.....0-0
31.03.04 .....Peru-Colombia 0-2
31.03.04 .....Uruguay-Venezuela 0-3
01.06.04 .....Bolivia-Paraguay 2-1
01.06.04 .....Uruguay-Peru 1-3
01.06.04 .....Venezuela-Chile 0-1
02.06.04 .....Brazil-Argentina 3-1
02.06.04 .....Ecuador-Colombia.....2-1
05.06.04 .....Ecuador-Bolivia 3-2
06.06.04 .....Argentina-Paraguay 0-0
06.06.04 .....Chile-Brazil.....1-1
06.06.04 .....Colombia-Uruguay.....5-0
06.06.04 .....Peru-Venezuela 0-0
04.09.04 .....Peru-Argentina 1-3
05.09.04 .....Brazil-Bolivia 3-1
05.09.04 .....Chile-Colombia.....0-0
05.09.04 .....Paraguay-Venezuela 1-0
05.09.04 .....Uruguay-Ecuador 1-0
09.10.04 .....Argentina-Uruguay
09.10.04 .....Bolivia-Peru
09.10.04 .....Colombia-Paraguay
09.10.04 .....Venezuela-Brazil
10.10.04 .....Ecuador-Chile
12.10.04 .....Bolivia-Uruguay
13.10.04 .....Brazil-Colombia
13.10.04 .....Chile-Argentina
13.10.04 .....Paraguay-Peru
14.10.04 .....Venezuela-Ecuador
16/17.11.04....Argentina-Venezuela
16/17.11.04....Colombia-Bolivia
16/17.11.04....Ecuador-Brazil
16/17.11.04....Peru-Chile
16/17.11.04....Uruguay-Paraguay
26/27.03.05....Bolivia-Argentina
26/27.03.05....Brazil-Peru
26/27.03.05....Chile-Uruguay
26/27.03.05....Ecuador-Paraguay
26/27.03.05....Venezuela-Colombia
29/30.03.05....Argentina-Colombia
29/30.03.05....Bolivia-Venezuela
29/30.03.05....Paraguay-Chile
29/30.03.05....Peru-Ecuador
29/30.03.05....Uruguay-Brazil
04/05.06.05....Brazil-Paraguay
04/05.06.05....Chile-Bolivia
04/05.06.05....Colombia-Peru
04/05.06.05....Ecuador-Argentina

04/05.06.05....Venezuela-Uruguay
07/08.06.05....Argentina-Brazil
07/08.06.05....Chile-Venezuela
07/08.06.05....Colombia-Ecuador
07/08.06.05....Paraguay-Bolivia
07/08.06.05....Peru-Uruguay
03/04.09.05....Bolivia-Ecuador
03/04.09.05....Brazil-Chile
03/04.09.05....Paraguay-Argentina
03/04.09.05....Uruguay-Colombia
03/04.09.05....Venezuela-Peru
08/09.10.05....Argentina-Peru
08/09.10.05....Bolivia-Brazil
08/09.10.05....Colombia-Chile
08/09.10.05....Ecuador-Uruguay
08/09.10.05....Venezuela-Paraguay
11/12.10.05....Brazil-Venezuela
11/12.10.05....Chile-Ecuador
11/12.10.05....Paraguay-Colombia
11/12.10.05....Peru-Bolivia
11/12.10.05....Uruguay-Argentina

Top four qualify for finals; fifth-placed side enter a play-off against Oceania section winners for a place in finals

EUROPE

EUROPEAN SUPERCUP

Aug 27 - Louis II stadium, Monaco
FC Porto (Por) 1 (Ricardo Quaresma 78)
Valencia (Spa) 2 (Baraja 33, Di Vaio 67)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Hauge (Nor)
Porto: Vitor Baia - Seitaridis, Jorge Costa, Pepe, Nuno Valente, Hugo Leal (Ricardo Quaresma 61), Costinha, Maniche, Carlos Alberto, Helder Postiga, McCarthy (Cesar Peixoto 72).
Valencia: Canizares - Curro Torres, Navarro, Marchena, Carboni, Vicente, Baraja, Albelda, Rufete, Corradi (Aimar 87), Di Vaio (Mista 77).

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

3rd qual rnd, 2nd legs

August 24

Anderlecht (Blg) 3 (Mpenza 34, 59, Jestrovic pen 73)
Benfica (Por) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Farina (Ita)
Sent off: Argel (Benfica) 72min
Anderlecht 3-1 on agg

Deportivo La Coruna (Spa) 3 (Victor 59, 65, Pandiani 88)
Shelbourne (Ire) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Hamer (Lux)
Sent off: Moore (Shelbourne) 90min
Deportivo 3-0 on agg

Internazionale (Ita) 4 (Adriano 1, 52, Stankovic 12, Recoba 59)
Basle (Swi) 1 (Sterjovski 49)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Frisk (Swe)
Inter 5-2 on agg

Liverpool (Eng) 0
Grazer AK (Aut) 1 (Tokic 54)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Medina Cantalejo (Spa)
Liverpool 2-1 on agg

Maccabi Haifa (Isr) 2 (Badir 31, Boccoli 38)
Rosenborg (Nor) 3 (Brattbakk 90, Braaten 94, Berg 120)
Aet. **HT:** 2-0. **90mins:** 2-1. **Ref:** Veissiere (Fra)
Sent off: Graieb (Maccabi) 26min
Rosenborg 5-3 on agg

Monaco (Fra) 6 (Chevanton 18, Bernardi 32, El Fakiri 42, Kallon 47, Farnerud 66, Adebayor pen 84)
Gorica (Sln) 0
HT: 3-0. **Ref:** Riley (Eng)
Sent off: Suler (Gorica) 40min
Monaco 9-0 on agg

August 25

Banik Ostrava (Cze) 2 (Papadopulos 38, Zurek 82)
Bayer Leverkusen (Ger) 1 (Berbatov 76)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Mejuto Gonzalez (Spa)
Leverkusen 6-2 on agg

Club Brugge (Blg) 2 (Ceh 15, pen 34)
Shakhtar Donetsk (Ukr) 2 (Vukic 6, 52)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Bennett (Eng)
Sent off: Stoican (Shakhtar) 75min
Shakhtar 6-3 on agg

Djurgardens (Swe) 1 (Arneng 19)
Juventus (Ita) 4 (Del Piero 10, Trezeguet 35, 87, Nedved 54)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Poll (Eng)
Juventus 6-3 on agg

Maccabi Tel Aviv (Isr) 1 (L Cohen 8)
PAOK Salonika (Gre) 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Michel (Slk)
Sent off: Abu Siam (Maccabi) 65min
Maccabi 4-0 on agg

Manchester United (Eng) 3 (Smith 47, 49, Bellion 70)
Dinamo Bucharest (Rom) 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Merk (Ger)
Man Utd 5-1 on agg

PSV Eindhoven (Hol) 5 (Van Bommel pen 9, 56, Beasley 32, De Jong 57, Vennegoor of Hesselink 80)
Red Star Belgrade (Ser) 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Ivanov (Rus)
Sent off: Bisevac (Red Star) 29min
PSV 7-3 on agg

Rangers (Sco) 1 (Thompson 87)
CSKA Moscow (Rus) 1 (Vagner Love 60)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Stark (Ger)
CSKA 3-2 on agg

Real Madrid (Spa) 3 (Ronaldo 3, 31, Pavon 85)
Wisla Krakow (Pol) 1 (Gorawski 89)
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Milton Nielsen (Den)
Real Madrid 5-1 on agg

Sparta Prague (Cze) 2 (Zelenka 45, Homola 114)
Ferencvaros (Hun) 0
Aet. **HT:** 1-0. **90mins:** 1-0. **Ref:** Meier (Swi)
Sparta 2-1 on agg

Trabzonspor (Tur) 0
Kyiv Dynamo (Ukr) 2 (Gavrancic 6, Diogo Rincon 28)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Messina (Ita)
Sent off: Rodolfo (Dynamo) 47min
Dynamo 3-2 on agg

UEFA CUP

2nd qual rnd

1st legs, Aug 10/12; 2nd legs, Aug 26

AEK Larnaca (Cyp) v Maccabi Petach Tikva (Isr)
3-0, 0-4 (agg 3-4)
Amica Wronki (Pol) v Honved (Hun)
1-0, 0-1 (aet) (agg 1-1; Amica 5-4 on pens)
Artmedia Bratislava (Slk) v Dnipro (Ukr)
0-3, 1-1 (agg 1-4)
Banska Bystrica (Slk) v Wil 1900 (Swi)
3-1, 1-1 (agg 4-2)
Beveren (Blg) v Vaduz (Lie)
3-1, 2-1 (agg 5-2)
Bodo/Glimt (Nor) v Levadia Tallinn (Est)
2-1, 1-2 (aet) (agg 3-3; Bodo/Glimt 8-7 on pens)
Buducnost BD (Ser) v Maribor (Sln)
1-2, 1-0 (agg 2-2; Maribor on away goals)
Dinamo Zagreb (Cro) v Primorje (Sln)
4-0, 0-2 (agg 4-2)
FH (Ice) v Dunfermline (Sco)
2-2, 2-1 (agg 4-3)
Genclerbirligi (Tur) v Rijeka (Cro)
1-0, 1-2 (agg 2-2; Genclerbirligi on away goals)
Gientoran (Nl) v Elfsborg (Swe)
0-1, 1-2 (agg 1-3)
Hammarby (Swe) v IA Akranes (Ice)
2-0, 2-1 (agg 4-1)
Hapoel Bnei Sakhnin (Isr) v Partizani Tirana (Alb)
3-0, 3-1 (agg 6-1)
Illichivets (Ukr) v Austria Wien (Aut)
0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)
Levski Sofia (Bul) v Modrica (Bos)
5-0, 3-0 (agg 8-0)
Metalurh Donetsk (Ukr) v FC Tiraspol (Mol)
3-0, 2-1 (agg 5-1)
Nistru Otaci (Mol) v Sigma Olomouc (Cze)
1-2, 0-4 (agg 1-6)
Odd Grenland (Nor) v Ekranas (Lit)
3-1, 1-2 (agg 4-3)
Omonia (Cyp) v CSKA Sofia (Bul)
1-1, 1-3 (aet) (agg 2-4)
Osters (Swe) v Metalurgs Liepaja (Lat)
2-2, 1-1 (agg 3-3; Metalurgs on away goals)
Otelul (Rom) v Partizan Belgrade (Ser)
0-0, 0-1 (agg 0-1)
Pasching (Aut) v Zenit St Petersburg (Rus)
3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3; Zenit on away goals)
Rapid Wien (Aut) v Rubin Kazan (Rus)
0-2, 3-0 (agg 3-2)
Slavia Prague (Cze) v Dinamo Tbilisi (Geo)
3-1, 0-2 (agg 3-3; Dinamo on away goals)
Stabaek (Nor) v FC Haka (Fin)
3-1, 3-1 (agg 6-2)
FC Tbilisi (Geo) v Legia Warsaw (Pol)
0-1, 0-6 (agg 0-7)
Terek Grozny (Rus) v Lech Poznan (Pol)
1-0, 1-0 (agg 2-0)
Ujpest (Hun) v Servette (Swi)
3-1, 2-0 (agg 5-1)
Ventspils (Lat) v Brondby (Den)
0-0, 1-1 (agg 1-1; Ventspils on away goals)
Zalgiris (Lit) v AaB Aalborg (Den)
1-3, 0-0 (agg 1-3)
Zeleznik (Ser) v Steaua Bucharest (Rom)
2-4, 2-1 (agg 4-5)
Zeljeznicar (Bos) v Litex Lovech (Bul)
1-2, 0-7 (agg 1-9)

1st rnd draw

AaB Aalborg v Auxerre (Fra)
Aigaleo (Gre) v Genclerbirligi
Austria Wien v Legia Warsaw
Banska Bystrica v Benfica (Por)
Bodo/Glimt v Besiktas (Tur)
Club Brugge (Blg) v Chateauroux (Fra)
Dinamo Zagreb v Elfsborg
FH v Alemannia Aachen (Ger)
Gorica (Sln) v AEK Athens (Gre)
Grazer AK (Aut) v Litex Lovech
Hammarby v Villarreal (Spa)
Hearts (Sco) v Sporting Braga (Por)
Levski Sofia v Beveren
Maccabi Haifa (Isr) v Dnipro
Maccabi Petach Tikva v Heerenveen (Hol)*
Maritimo (Por) v Rangers (Sco)
Metalurh Donetsk v Lazio (Ita)
Middlesbrough (Eng) v Banik Ostrava (Cze)
Millwall (Eng) v Ferencvaros (Hun)
Newcastle (Eng) v Hapoel Bnei Sakhnin
Odd Grenland v Feyenoord (Hol)
Panionios (Gre) v Udinese (Ita)
PAOK Salonika (Gre) v AZ Alkmaar (Hol)
Parma (Ita) v Maribor
Partizan Belgrade v Dinamo Bucharest (Rom)
Schalke (Ger) v Metalurgs Liepaja
Sevilla (Spa) v Nacional (Por)
Shelbourne (Ire) v Lille (Fra)
Sochaux (Fra) v Stabaek
Sporting Lisbon (Por) v Rapid Wien
Standard Liege (Blg) v Bochum (Ger)
Steaua Bucharest v CSKA Sofia
Terek Grozny v Basle (Swi)
Trabzonspor (Tur) v Athletic Bilbao (Spa)
Ujpest v Stuttgart (Ger)
Utrecht (Hol) v Djurgardens (Swe)
Ventspils v Amica Wronki
Wisla Krakow (Pol) v Dinamo Tbilisi
Zaragoza (Spa) v Sigma Olomouc
Zenit St Petersburg v Red Star Belgrade (Ser)

1st legs: September 16; 2nd legs: September 30
**1st leg: September 22*

Winners enter group stage

INTERTOTO CUP

Finals

1st legs, Aug 10; 2nd legs, Aug 24

Lille (Fra) v Uniao Leiria (Por)
0-0, 2-0 (aet) (agg 2-0)
Schalke (Ger) v Slovan Liberec (Cze)
2-1, 1-0 (agg 3-1)
Villarreal (Spa) v Atletico Madrid (Spa)
2-0, 0-2 (aet) (agg 2-2; Villarreal 3-1 on pens)

Winners enter UEFA Cup at 1st rnd stage

AUSTRIA

Aug 14: Mattersburg 0 Grazer AK 1; Salzburg 4 Bregenz 2; Pasching 0 Admira 3; Austria Wien 2 Wacker Tirol 2; Sturm Graz 0 Rapid Wien 1.
Aug 21: Rapid Wien 3 Mattersburg 0; Grazer AK 2 Pasching 1; Salzburg 4 Admira 2; Wacker Tirol 2 Sturm Graz 1.
Aug 22: Bregenz 0 Austria Wien 9.
Aug 28: Admira 2 Grazer AK 0; Mattersburg 2 Wacker Tirol 1; Sturm Graz 0 Bregenz 0.
Aug 29: Austria Wien 2 Salzburg 0; Pasching 2 Rapid Wien 1.

AUSTRIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Grazer AK	7	5	0	2	8	5	15
Rapid Wien	7	4	2	1	15	5	14
Austria Wien	7	3	3	1	17	6	12
Admira	7	4	0	3	14	8	12
Pasching	7	3	1	3	9	11	10
Salzburg	7	2	3	2	9	8	9
Wacker Tirol	7	2	3	2	8	10	9
Sturm Graz	7	2	1	4	5	8	7
Mattersburg	7	2	1	4	7	11	7
Bregenz	7	0	2	5	5	25	2

BELGIUM

Friday, August 13

Standard 1 (Bangoura 27)
Charleroi 2 (Chabaud 41, Brogno 45) Att: 20,000

Saturday, August 14

Anderlecht 2 (Baratto og 47, Dindane 67)
St Truiden 1 (Van Imschoot 68) Att: 23,204

Genk 0
Mouscron 0 Att: 23,000

La Louviere 2 (Ishiaku pen 57, Djebbour 88)
Cercle Brugge 1 (De Smet 7) Att: 4,000

Lokeren 1 (Ademilson 48)
FC Brussels 0 Att: 4,000

Westerlo 2 (Dosunmu 3, 35)
Lierse 1 (Raeymaeckers 51) Att: 6,500

Sunday, August 15

Club Brugge 5 (Balaban 19, Verheyen 40, Simons 66, Victor 70, Cornelis 90)
Gent 0 Att: 24,173

Germinal Beerschot 4 (Cadu 26, 48, 63, Camara 61)
Ostende 0 Att: 7,000

Mons 2 (Datti 5, 33)
Beveren 2 (Romaric 43, Eboue 50) Att: 4,000

Saturday, August 21

Gent 2 (Cherrad 5, Cooreman 57)
Mons 1 (Babatunde 15) Att: 6,800

Charleroi 0
Westerlo 1 (Delen 3) Att: 8,029

Mouscron 4 (Lorenzi 22, Dimbala 34, 58, Martic 44)
St Truiden 0 Att: 6,300

Ostende 1 (Zoko 71)
Club Brugge 2 (Stoica 54, Victor 81) Att: 7,000

Lierse 2 (Solari 8, 18)
Germinal Beerschot 0 Att: 8,000

Beveren 0
Anderlecht 1 (Mpenza 55) Att: 7,000

Sunday, August 22

Cercle Brugge 1 (Roiha 66)
Standard 3 (Tchite 10, 69, Kaklamanos 90) Att: 5,200

FC Brussels 1 (Kinet pen 53)
La Louviere 1 (Klukowski 5) Att: 4,500

Genk 2 (Vandenbergh 66, Claessens 86)
Lokeren 1 (Tailson 49) Att: 20,536

Friday, August 27

La Louviere 2 (Murcy 57, Odemwingie 69)
Genk 0 Att: 4,000

Saturday, August 28

Anderlecht 2 (Jestrovic 36, Iachtchouk 66)
Gent 0 Att: 23,493

Mons 2 (Datti 36, pen 60)
Ostende 0 Att: 3,500

Club Brugge 1 (Lange 81)
Lierse 0 Att: 24,316

Lokeren 1 (Gretarsson pen 90)
Mouscron 1 (Noukeu 67) Att: 4,500

Standard 1 (Deflandre 47)
FC Brussels 3 (Bruno 44, Culek 52, Selemani 68) Att: 15,000

Westerlo 1 (Paas 4)
Cercle Brugge 2 (Boi 80, Meyssen 90) Att: 4,000

Sunday, August 29

Germinal Beerschot 0
Charleroi 1 (Chabaud 10) Att: 7,000

St Truiden 0
Beveren 1 (Romaric pen 89) Att: 5,500

BELGIUM

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Club Brugge	4	3	1	0	9	2	10
La Louviere	4	3	1	0	10	4	10
Anderlecht	4	3	0	1	5	3	9
Mouscron	4	2	2	0	7	1	8
Westerlo	4	2	1	1	7	6	7
Genk	4	2	1	1	3	3	7
Germinal B	4	2	0	2	5	3	6
Charleroi	4	2	0	2	5	7	6
Mons	4	1	2	1	5	4	5
Lokeren	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Beveren	4	1	2	1	4	4	5
FC Brussels	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Lierse	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Standard	4	1	1	2	6	7	4
Cercle Brugge	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Gent	4	1	0	3	2	9	3
St Truiden	4	0	1	3	1	7	1
Ostende	4	0	1	3	4	11	1

LEADING GOALSCORERS
5 Tosin Dosunmu (Westerlo)
4 Cadu (Germinal Beerschot)
4 Mohamed Aliyu Datti (Mons)

BULGARIA

Aug 14: Spartak Varna 1 Pirin 2; Nesebar 2 Rodopa 0; Slavia 1 CSKA 4; Beroe 2 Belasitsa 0.
Aug 15: Lokomotiv Sofia 4 Marek 2; Cherno More 1 Lovech 3; Levski 2 Vidima-Rakovski 0; Naftex 1 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1.
Aug 21: Marek 2 Cherno More 1; Rodopa 1 Naftex 0; Lokomotiv Plovdiv 5 Spartak Varna 0; Pirin 0 Beroe 0; Belasitsa 1 Lokomotiv Sofia 0; Vidima-Rakovski 0 Slavia 1; CSKA 5 Nesebar 0.
Aug 22: Lovech 0 Levski 1.
Aug 27: Slavia 4 Nesebar 1.
Aug 28: Cherno More 3 Belasitsa 0; Spartak Varna 0 Rodopa 1; Lokomotiv Sofia 0 Pirin 0.
Aug 29: Beroe 2 Lokomotiv Plovdiv 1; Vidima-Rakovski 1 Lovech 2; Levski 3 Marek 2; Naftex 0 CSKA 4.

BULGARIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
CSKA	4	4	0	0	14	1	12
Levski	4	4	0	0	9	2	12
Lovech	4	3	0	1	7	3	9
Lok Plovdiv	4	2	1	1	11	4	7
Beroe	4	2	1	1	4	2	7
Belasitsa	4	2	0	2	5	5	6
Marek	4	2	0	2	7	8	6
Rodopa	4	2	0	2	2	3	6
Slavia	4	2	0	2	6	8	6
Pirin	4	1	2	1	2	2	5
Naftex	4	1	1	2	2	6	4
Cherno More	4	1	0	3	6	7	3
Vidima-Rakovski	4	1	0	3	3	6	3
Nesebar	4	1	0	3	4	13	3
Lok Sofia*	4	1	1	2	4	5	1
Spartak Varna	4	0	0	4	1	12	0

**3pts deducted for non-payment of wages*

CROATIA

Aug 14: Pula 2 Osijek 0; Inter 2 Slaven 0; Hajduk 2 Kamen Ingrad 0; Zagreb 0 Medimurje 1.
Aug 15: Varteks 2 Dinamo 2.
Aug 16: Rijeka 2 Zadar 0.
Aug 21: Medimurje 1 Pula 1; Kamen Ingrad 4 Zagreb 1; Slaven 1 Hajduk 0; Zadar 0 Inter 2; Dinamo 1 Rijeka 1; Osijek 1 Varteks 3.
Aug 28: Pula 3 Varteks 0; Zagreb 0 Slaven 2; Hajduk 4 Zadar 0; Medimurje 1 Kamen Ingrad 4.
Aug 29: Rijeka 4 Osijek 0; Inter 1 Dinamo 0.

CROATIA

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Inter	6	6	0	0	10	0	18
Rijeka	6	4	2	0	11	3	14
Hajduk	6	3	1	2	12	7	10
Kamen Ingrad	6	3	0	3	12	9	9
Pula	6	2	3	1	10	7	9
Varteks	6	2	1	3	14	12	7
Dinamo	6	1	4	1	10	10	7
Osijek	6	2	1	3	6	11	7
Slaven	6	2	1	3	4	10	7
Zagreb	6	2	0	4	7	10	6
Medimurje	6	1	1	4	5	13	4
Zadar	6	1	0	5	7	16	3

CZECH REPUBLIC

Aug 14: Drnovice 2 Sparta 3; Opava 2 Mlada Boleslav 1.
Aug 15: Jablonec 1 Ostrava 1; Ceske Budejovice 0 Pribram 0; Chmel Blsany 0 Brno 1.
Aug 16: Slovacko 1 Olomouc 0; Slavia 1 Liberec 0.
Aug 20: Liberec 2 Pribram 0; Sparta 5 Opava 1.
Aug 21: Zlin 0 Chmel Blsany 0; Olomouc 2 Slavia 1; Ostrava 2 Ceske Budejovice 0.
Aug 22: Jablonec 1 Drnovice 0; Mlada Boleslav 0 Teplice 0.
Aug 23: Brno 1 Slovacko 0.
Aug 25: Teplice 2 Zlin 1.
Aug 28: Slovacko 1 Jablonec 0; Chmel Blsany 1 Sparta 3.
Aug 29: Teplice 2 Drnovice 1; Opava 1 Ostrava 1; Ceske Budejovice 3 Mlada Boleslav 0; Pribram 0 Zlin 0.
Aug 30: Slavia 3 Brno 0; Liberec 3 Olomouc 0.

CZECH REPUBLIC

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Sparta	4	3	1	0	12	5	10
Teplice	4	3	1	0	6	3	10
Brno	4	3	0	1	3	3	9
Liberec	3	2	0	1	5	1	6
Slavia	4	2	0	2	5	3	6
Olomouc	4	2	0	2	4	6	6
Ostrava	4	1	2	1	5	4	5
Zlin	4	1	2	1	2	2	5
Pribram	4	1	2	1	2	3	5
Ceske Budejovice	4	1	1	2	4	4	4
Jablonec	4	1	1	2	2	3	4
Mlada Boleslav	4	1	1	2	2	5	4
Opava	4	1	1	2	5	9	4
Chmel Blsany	3	0	1	2	1	4	1
Drnovice	4	0	0	4	3	7	0
Slovacko*	4	2	1	1	3	2	-5

**12pts deducted for the club's part in a bribery scandal*

DENMARK

Aug 14: Randers 0 AGF 3.
Aug 15: AaB 1 Viborg 2; Herfolge 0 Nordsjaelland 2; Brondby 2 Midtjylland 1; Silkeborg 2 Esbjerg 1; FC Copenhagen 1 OB 1.
Aug 29: OB 0 AGF 2; Viborg 0 Nordsjaelland 1; Esbjerg 7 Herfolge 2; Midtjylland 3 Randers 1; FC Copenhagen 3 AaB 2; Brondby 1 Silkeborg 0.

DENMARK

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Silkeborg	5	3	1	1	10	7	10
Brondby	5	3	1	1	6	3	10
Midtjylland	5	3	0	2	8	8	9
AGF	5	2	2	1	8	5	8
Esbjerg	4	2	1	1	13	6	7
OB	5	2	1	2	9	7	7
Nordsjaelland	5	2	1	2	7	7	7
Viborg	5	2	1	2	5	6	7
Herfolge	5	2	1	2	5	10	7
FC Copenhagen	5	1	3	1	10	10	6
AaB	5	1	0	4	7	9	3
Randers	4	0	0	4	2	12	0

ENGLAND

Saturday, August 14

Aston Villa 2 (Vassell 12, Cole 34)
Southampton 0 Att: 36,690

Blackburn 1 (Short 70)
West Bromwich 1 (Clement 33) Att: 23,475

Bolton 4 (Okocha 11, 59, Pedersen 30, 72)
Charlton 1 (Lisbie 67) Att: 24,100

Manchester City 1 (Fowler 30)
Fulham 1 (John 56) Att: 44,026

Middlesbrough 2 (Downing 73, Hasselbaink 90)
Newcastle 2 (Bellamy 13, Shearer pen 83) Att: 34,268

Norwich 1 (Huckerby 16)
Crystal Palace 1 (Johnson 73) Att: 23,717

Portsmouth 1 (Unsworth pen 15)
Birmingham 1 (Savage 10) Att: 20,021

Tottenham 1 (Defoe 71)
Liverpool 1 (Cisse 38) Att: 35,105

Sunday, August 15

Chelsea 1 (Gudjohnsen 15)
Manchester Utd 0 Att: 41,813

Everton 1 (Carsley 64)
Arsenal 4 (Bergkamp 23, Reyes 39, Ljungberg 54, Pires 82) Att: 35,521

Saturday, August 21

Birmingham 0
Chelsea 1 (J Cole 69) Att: 28,559

Charlton 2 (Euell 23, Unsworth og 87)
Portsmouth 1 (Berger 53) Att: 25,204

Crystal Palace 1 (Hudson 9)
Everton 3 (Gravesen 19, 62, Bent 82) Att: 23,666

Fulham 2 (Cole 5, 82)
Bolton 0 Att: 17,541

Liverpool 2 (Baros 48, Gerrard 75)
Manchester City 1 (Anelka 45) Att: 42,831

Manchester Utd 2 (Bellion 32, Smith 50)
Norwich 1 (McVeigh 75) Att: 67,812

Newcastle 0
Tottenham 1 (Atouba 51) Att: 52,185

Southampton 3 (Phillips 32, A Svensson 74, Beattie pen 90)
Blackburn 2 (Ferguson 50, Dickov 68) Att: 27,492

Sunday, August 22

Arsenal 5 (Henry 25, 90, Bergkamp 54, Pires 65, Reyes 65)
Middlesbrough 3 (Job 43, Hasselbaink 50, Queudrue 53) Att: 37,415

West Bromwich 1 (Clement 38)
Aston Villa 1 (Mellberg 4) Att: 26,601

Tuesday, August 24

Birmingham 1 (Heskey 8)
Manchester City 0 Att: 28,551

Crystal Palace 0
Chelsea 2 (Drogba 28, Tiago 72) Att: 24,953

Wednesday, August 25

Arsenal 3 (Henry 50, Gilberto Silva 58, Reyes 79)
Blackburn 0 Att: 37,496

Charlton 3 (Jeffers 29, 34, Young 58)
Aston Villa 0 Att: 26,190

Fulham 0
Middlesbrough 2 (Viduka 54, Nemeth 79) Att: 17,759

Newcastle 2 (Bellamy 40, Hughes 50)
Norwich 2 (Bentley 52, Doherty 74) Att: 51,574

Southampton 1 (Crouch 85)
Bolton 2 (Pedersen 7, Okocha pen 27) Att: 30,713

West Bromwich 1 (Gera 3)
Tottenham 1 (Defoe 34) Att: 27,191

Saturday, August 28

Aston Villa 4 (Mellberg 4, Cole 53, Barry 71, Angel 82)
Newcastle 2 (Kluivert 28, O'Brien 36) Att: 36,305

Blackburn 1 (Dickov 17)
Manchester Utd 1 (Smith 90) Att: 26,155

Chelsea 2 (Beattie og 34, Lampard pen 41)
Southampton 1 (Beattie 1) Att: 40,864

Everton 2 (Osman 2, 70)
West Bromwich 1 (Dobie 7) Att: 34,510

Manchester City 4 (Anelka 13, 60, Sinclair 34, Wright-Phillips 78)
Charlton 0 Att: 43,593

Middlesbrough 2 (Popovic og 61, Hasselbaink 78)
Crystal Palace 1 (Johnson pen 52) Att: 31,560

Norwich 1 (Huckerby pen 50)
Arsenal 4 (Reyes 22, Henry 36, Pires 40, Bergkamp 90) Att: 23,944

Tottenham 1 (Defoe 35)
Birmingham 0 Att: 35,290

Sunday, August 29

Bolton 1 (Davies 38)
Liverpool 0 Att: 27,880

Monday, August 30

Manchester Utd 0
Everton 0 Att: 67,803

Portsmouth 4 (Berkovic 19, Aiyegbeni pen 22, 28, 72)
Fulham 3 (Cole 39, Boa Morte 41, Bocanegra 75) Att: 19,728